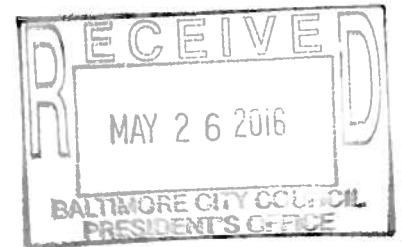




BALTIMORE HOUSING

STEPHANIE
RAWLINGS-BLAKE
Mayor

PAUL T. GRAZIANO
Executive Director, HABC
Commissioner, HCD



MEMORANDUM

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

From: Paul T. Graziano, Commissioner

Date: May 25, 2016

Re: **City Council Bill 16-0651 - Property Tax Exemption – Community-Managed Open Space**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 16-0651, for the purpose of exempting certain properties containing community-managed open space from the City's real property tax; defining certain terms; setting the requirements for properties to qualify for the real property tax exemption; providing for a special effective date; and generally relating to a property tax exemption for community-managed open space.

If enacted, this bill would encourage the use, maintenance and protection of property for community gardens, small recreation and relaxation spaces and other sites dedicated for community open space use by exempting them from the City's real property tax. Typically, sites dedicated for use as community open space are owned by small non-profit organizations so exempting them from paying property tax would make it more economically feasible to manage for long-term sustainability.

Through Vacants to Value, HCD's Land Resources Division has worked closely with Parks & People and Baltimore Green Space to identify and catalog community managed open space. We encourage individuals and community groups to adopt open space which decreases the City's maintenance costs, encourages neighborly interactions, and generally improves the quality of life in the city.

We have reviewed Planning's bill report and agree with the suggested amendments to increase the open spaces in a cultivated state from no larger than 1 acre to 2 acres and increasing sensitive environmental areas from not more than 8 acres to 10 acres.

The Department of Housing and Community Development supports the passage, with the suggested amendments from the Department of Planning, of City Council Bill 16-0651.



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PTG:sd

cc: Ms. Angela Gibson, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*
Mr. Colin Tarbert, *Deputy Mayor*