


FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #21-0004R/ RECOGNIZING SYSTEMIC RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS		

TO The Honorable President and
 Members of the City Council
 City Hall, Room 400
 100 North Holliday Street

DATE: February 11, 2021

The Department of Planning is in receipt of City Council Bill #21-0004R, which is for the purpose of recognizing systemic racism as a public health crisis.

The Department of Planning recommends approval of City Council Bill #21-0004R.

Housing and planning policies embedded with systemic racism have historically resulted in segregation and continue to perpetuate de facto segregation today. Environmental racism has also created unequal access to economic opportunity and has led to numerous health disparities. Black and brown residents of Baltimore disproportionately live in healthy food priority areas, neighborhoods with poor air quality due to incineration and industry, and areas with scarce access to safe green spaces. These environmental injustices directly lead to obesity, diabetes, and other health problems associated with poor nutrition, elevated levels of asthma and respiratory issues, and high rates of mental health issues and trauma.

The Department of Planning's Office of Sustainability leads Baltimore's Cities Connecting Children to Nature (BCCCN) Initiative to address inequitable access to the health and academic benefits associated with time in nature and access to green space. Black and brown children are much less likely to live near safe nature spaces. Spending time outdoors in green space lowers rates of obesity and physical health issues, and decreases the impacts of depression, trauma, anxiety, and a number of other mental health issues. The Office of Sustainability has committed to increasing equitable access to nature by promoting trauma-informed and nature-based practices for youth program providers, creating green schoolyards, expanding youth employment, and activating the Baltimore Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

The Department of Planning also works on Baltimore's food policy and urban agriculture to improve access to fresh food, and has the responsibility to continue working towards equitable planning and zoning processes, as well as informing policy to reduce pollution and other environmental health hazards.

The Department of Planning supports City Council Bill #21-0004R.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Lisa McNeilly, Division Chief, Sustainability Division at 410-396-8360.

CR/ldm

cc: Ms. Natasha Mehu, Mayor's Office
Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
The Honorable Eric Costello, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Mr. Matthew Stegman, City Council President's Office
Ms. Nikki Thompson, City Council President's Office
Mr. Colin Tarbert, BDC
Ms. Kathleen Byrne, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Liam Davis, DOT
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services
Mr. Dominic McAily, Council Services