



DATE: September 23, 2020

TO: Equity and Structure Committee

FROM: Department of Real Estate

POSITION: Oppose

RE: Council Resolution 20-0563, "Charter Amendment—Disposition of City-Owned Real Property"

INTRODUCTION:

The Department of Real Estate is herein reporting on City Council Resolution 20-0563 introduced by Councilman Schleifer.

PURPOSE:

To amend Article V, §5 of the City Charter to repeal the Department of Real Estate's authority to dispose of City-owned property no longer needed for public use at a private sale, and make other confirming changes.

BRIEF HISTORY:

If enacted, this Resolution would require the Department of Real Estate, which reports to and is subject to the oversight of the Comptroller's Office, to dispose of all unneeded City property through public sale to the highest bidder. While the goals of transparency in property sales and maximizing revenue to the City through public sales are commendable, an unintended consequence of this legislation would be to put individuals and non-profit organizations in a bidding contest with speculative investors or well-capitalized developers for property such as vacant lots, side yards, and other underutilized properties that are repurposed for beneficial community use. A wide range of charitable and social service organizations acquire land and buildings from the City through the private sale process for use as community gardens, food distribution centers, and job training sites, among many other things. These programs contribute to the quality of life in Baltimore City in ways that cannot be quantified as easily as a revenue stream from the sale of property but are just as important in terms of meeting the needs of City residents.

FISCAL IMPACT: N/A

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT POSITION:

The Department of Real Estate opposes the passage of City Council Bill 20-0563 as drafted.

Sincerely,

Walter J Horton
Real Estate Officer