

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF LAW

GEORGE A. NILSON, City Solicitor  
101 City Hall  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

July 16, 2015

The Honorable President and Members  
of the Baltimore City Council  
Attn: Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary  
Room 409, City Hall  
100 N. Holliday Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: City Council Bill 15-0530 – Rezoning – Certain Properties in the Sharp  
Leadenhall Community

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Law Department has reviewed City Council Bill 15-0530 for form and legal sufficiency. The bill would change the zoning for certain properties in the Sharp Leadenhall community. Thirteen properties will be rezoned from M-2-2 to B-2-4 and one from R-8 to B-2-4.

The City Council may permit such a rezoning if it finds facts sufficient to show either a mistake in the existing zoning classification or a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood. Md. Ann. Code, Land Use Art., §10-304(b)(2). In evaluating whether the proposed rezoning meets this standard, the City Council is required to make findings of fact on the following matters: (1) population changes; (2) the availability of public facilities; (3) the present and future transportation patterns; (4) the compatibility with existing and proposed development; (5) the recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal Zoning Appeal; and (6) the relation of the proposed amendment to the City's plan. Md. Ann. Code, Land Use Art., §10-304(b)(1). The recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal Zoning Appeal must be based on certain considerations outlined in the City Code. *See* Baltimore City Zoning Code ("ZC"), §16-305.

The Law Department notes that the Report of the Planning Commission ("Report") provides findings of fact that would support this rezoning due to a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood. If the City Council, after its investigation of the facts, agrees that a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood has occurred and that facts identical or similar to those described in the Report apply, the Council may adopt finding based on its investigation and/or the Planning Commission Report and lawfully approve Council Bill 15-0530.

Fav w/ comm

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Certain procedural requirements apply to this bill beyond those listed above because a change in the zoning classification of a property is deemed a "legislative authorization." ZC §§16-101(c)(1); 16-101(d). Specifically, special notice requirements apply to the bill's introduction, including posting the property for 30 days within one week of the notice of introduction. *See* ZC §16-203. The bill must be referred to certain City agencies, which are obligated to review the bill in a specified manner. *See* ZC §§16-301, 16-302 & 16-305. Additional public notice and hearing requirements apply to the bill, including advertising the time, place and subject of the hearing in a paper of general circulation for 15 days and posting the property conspicuously with this same information. *See* Md. Ann. Code, Land Use Art., §10-303; ZC § 16-402. Finally, certain limitations on the City Council's ability to amend the bill apply, including a Third Reading hold-over before final passage by the Council. *See* ZC §§16-403, 16-404.

If the City Council makes appropriate findings of fact, the Law Department will approve the bill for form and legal sufficiency, assuming all the procedural requirements, noted above, have been met.

Sincerely,



Elena R. DiPietro  
Chief Solicitor

cc: George Nilson, City Solicitor  
Angela C. Gibson, Mayor's Legislative Liaison  
Hilary Ruley, Assistant Solicitor  
Victor Tervalo, Assistant Solicitor  
Jennifer Landis, Assistant Solicitor