

<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 <sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #19-0469/ RELEASE OF EASEMENT – 10 SOUTH HOWARD STREET

CITY of  
BALTIMORE  
**MEMO**

**TO**

DATE:

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

January 23, 2020

The Department of Planning is in receipt of City Council Bill #19-0469, which is for the purpose of authorizing the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore to release a pedestrian easement located on the property known as 10 South Howard Street and no longer needed for public use; and providing for a special effective date.

Howard Street has struggled for many years and is finally seeing the redevelopment potential come to fruition. In the last few years there have been many redevelopments moving forward along the corridor from Mulberry to Baltimore Street. The recent addition of the reconstruction of the Lexington Street Market further adds to the increased investment within the area. All of the projects along Howard Street, existing and proposed, front onto this main street and collectively add to the positive impact and transformation. It's important for these programs to do so in order to add vitality to the street and allow for the public environment to thrive in support of the private investment.

Public transit in Baltimore City, and specifically along Howard Street, has had some historically negative impacts on the vitality of the street. Throughout Baltimore City, transit connection it is limited, at best. We rely mainly on a bus network to get in and through the City with very limited rail access. Baltimore is beginning to see the change occur throughout the City wherein TOD (Transit Oriented Developments) are moving forward. The value of the Light Rail, albeit limited due to its service geography, is positive and allows to private development the greatest catchment area of prospective tenants, users, and pedestrian traffic. This is why public access to the stations we have, and further encouraging redevelopment around, them should be fully protected within the City and, specifically, Downtown.

The program of this proposed redevelopment is a great asset to the West Side and the University, and allows the opportunity for a new gateway experience for light rail riders to visit the building and access the University overall. The mid-block location and existing Redwood easement allow for that to happen directly and is likely the reason the easement exists at all. The proposed program of the building could easily adjust to capitalize on the public connection for its tenants and visitors while enhancing the public realm. The elimination of the easement access and creation of the building's main entrance on the Redwood Street and alley side of the building turns its back to a major Baltimore street and disconnects the activity of the building from the public environment. Physical design and actual building programs are what create the vibrancy of the urban environment. This connection is the very thing that each of the other redevelopments within the Howard Street corridor do.

The change in building program from a Government office building that is only active during business hours to a 24-hour residential building with ground level retail spaces along the light rail are the exact types of redevelopment that should activate the entire streetscape of Howard Street and connect to the light rail stops. We understand the immediate benefits the closure of this easement will offer the new owners of this building today. Our view is concerned with the longer term challenge that eliminating the easement and disconnecting these users and the broader public from a direct connection to the station will bring. For these reasons, the Department of Planning respectfully recommends disapproval of City Council Bill #19-0469.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

CR/ewt

cc: Mr. Nicholas Blendy, Mayor's Office  
Mr. Matthew Stegman, Mayor's Office  
Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office  
The Honorable Edward Reisinger, Council Rep. to Planning Commission  
Mr. Colin Tarbert, BDC  
Mr. Derek Baumgardner, 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 McAlily, Council Services