



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Caron Watkins Interim Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights Interim Chief Equity Officer
ANALYST	Zachary Wellman Equity Policy Analyst, Office of Equity & Civil Rights
DATE	May 30, 2024
SUBJECT	OECR Report on Baltimore City Council Bill 24-0504 Zoning - Open Space District - Conditional Use Cultural Facility and Parking Lot - Variances - C.C. Jackson Park and Library - 4910 Park Heights Avenue

OECR POSITION: Favorable; contingent on prescribed accessibility features

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION

The Office of Equity & Civil Rights (OECR) has reviewed and is herein reporting on City Council Bill 24-0504 – *Zoning - Open Space District - Conditional Use Cultural Facility and Parking Lot - Variances - C.C. Jackson Park and Library - 4910 Park Heights Avenue*. This is a zoning exception permit bill requested by the Department of Recreation & Parks.

The bill seeks to accomplish the following:

- Alter zoning restrictions for the lot at the corner of Park Heights Avenue and Woodland Avenue.
- Permit the conditional use of this lot for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of a parking lot in the Open Space zone.
- Allow a variance in the maximum parking in the Open Space zone to establish a larger off-street parking lot.

Council Bill 24-0504 does so by utilizing the authority of Article 32, Sections 5-201(a), 5-305(a), 5-508, and 7-202 of the Baltimore City Code to grant permission for this development in accordance with existing zoning laws.

ANALYSIS

Council Bill 24-0504 is intended to permit the construction of a larger parking lot that would accompany the upcoming community center in the Park Heights area. The requested exemption would green-light the development of a public parking lot that accommodates up to 47 cars instead

of the currently permitted limit of a 10-car lot. This public parking lot would be adjacent to the in-development Park Heights Branch Enoch-Pratt Free Library and neighbor the existing C.C. Jackson Recreational Center and C.C. Jackson Park. By maintaining the restriction on parking for this development, the residents of Park Heights, a primarily Black and historically disinvested community, would be negatively impacted by an artificial limit on the number of people who rely on vehicles as their primary mode of transportation can reasonably use these services/facilities at a given time.

This larger parking lot could improve accessibility for vehicles modified for disability use, school buses, multi-passenger vehicles, and employees, all of whom are bound by car-centric infrastructure. By accommodating more attendees at a given time, the parking lot could also encourage the use of all facilities in the community center, as well as invite residents from neighboring Northwest Baltimore communities to access the library, many of whom experience the impact of systemic and historic disinvestment as Park Heights.

Additionally, it is critical that the parking lot is accessible and can accommodate the necessary staff, patrons, and children so that this cultural facility is well-equipped to achieve its intended goal of steering children toward positive outlets, hosting community events, and providing personal development resources to residents.

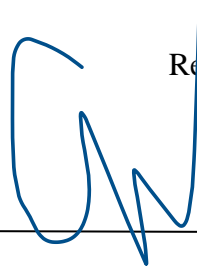
As a result, the OECR discerns no inequity in Council Bill 24-0504's intent or foreseeable impact. However, to ensure the zoning variation benefits all visitors, including those with disabilities, the parking lot should include the following accessibility features:

- Provide at least as many car and van-accessible spaces as prescribed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (for a 47-space lot, that would require two accessible spaces, one of which is van-accessible).
- Ensure there is a continuous accessible path of travel from the parking lot to all three nearby public features, namely the library, recreation center, and park.
- Equip connecting intersections with safety features to allow safe crossing by people with disabilities should one need to cross the street to access the library, rec center, or park, to ensure accessibility.

The approval of a zoning variance to develop a larger parking lot could benefit the residents serviced by the C.C. Jackson Recreation Center, C.C. Jackson Park, and Park Heights Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library

CONCLUSION

After reviewing, the Office of Equity & Civil Rights supports the effort to make the C.C. Jackson Park and Library Community Center more accessible and accommodating to Park Heights and the Northwest Baltimore residents. Therefore, the OECR offers a **favorable** committee report on City Council Bill 24-0504 contingent upon the implementation of the aforementioned accessibility features.



Respectfully Submitted,

Caron Watkins
Interim Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights