

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Bailey Voyles, and I am both a Baltimore City resident and an employee of the SolarAPP Foundation, the nonprofit organization that oversees SolarAPP+ — a free, online plan review platform developed by the U.S. Department of Energy to automate and streamline the approval of residential solar and energy storage systems.

I am writing to respectfully urge the Council to consider adopting SolarAPP+ to help address the City's current permitting backlog, particularly for residential rooftop solar. Baltimore's clean energy momentum is strong, but permitting delays continue to slow progress for residents, contractors, and city staff alike. SolarAPP+ is a proven, no-cost solution that can ease this burden.

To date, over 300 jurisdictions in 17 states have adopted SolarAPP+, collectively approving tens of thousands of residential solar permits and saving more than 70,000 hours of permitting staff time. One of these jurisdictions is Montgomery County, Maryland, which has seen measurable success since adopting SolarAPP+. The County has not only reduced permitting delays, but also experienced a decline in failed inspections for solar projects processed through the platform — a clear result of SolarAPP+'s built-in, automated code compliance checks.

Additionally, adopting SolarAPP+ would help Baltimore meet its obligations under the Maryland Bright Tomorrow Act, which requires jurisdictions to modernize and streamline permitting for residential solar. SolarAPP+ is specifically designed to help jurisdictions comply with that requirement while simultaneously saving staff time, improving inspection readiness, and expanding access to solar.

Other benefits of SolarAPP+ adoption include:

- Immediate permit issuance for eligible systems, reducing turnaround from months to minutes.
- Reduction in permitting staff time, allowing personnel to focus on more complex projects and reduce backlog.
- Improved code compliance and safety, with built-in plan review based on national and local electrical codes.
- Increased equity and access, as faster permitting can reduce soft costs and make solar more affordable for low- and moderate-income households.
- No cost for jurisdictions— While some soft costs, such as staff training or minor workflow adjustments, may be involved during implementation, the SolarAPP+ Foundation provides hands-on support and resources at no cost to help jurisdictions get started effectively.

As someone who works directly with local governments to implement SolarAPP+, I see every day how impactful this tool can be for jurisdictions and communities. I would be happy to

connect with my own city staff to discuss implementation pathways or connect Baltimore with peers in Maryland, or other states who are already using the tool successfully.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I encourage the Council to explore SolarAPP+ as a practical, proven step toward resolving the city's permitting challenges while supporting its broader clean energy and equity goals.

Sincerely,

Bailey Voyles



July 22, 2025

Dear Baltimore Council President Cohen, Councilwoman Ramos and Colleagues,

Enterprise is a national nonprofit that exists to make a good home possible for millions of families without one. We support community development organizations on the ground, aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance housing policy at every level of government, and build and manage communities ourselves. Since 2020, we have supported over fifteen Baltimore-based community development organizations and emerging real estate developers through two core programs – Enterprise Baltimore CDC Exchange and Equitable Path Forward.

Enterprise applauds the efforts of Baltimore City DHCD and other departments to modernize and update the permit system. We have heard from partners that since June 2025, they have seen improvements. Based on conversation with our partners, we share the following recommendations for areas of improvement:

- **Short-staffed given volume** – Partners expressed concern over inadequate staffing to address the current and growing volume of requests or applicant questions.
- **Lack of coordination between agencies** – Partners expressed a desire for better communication between agencies to reduce delays and conflicting information shared from agencies and/or the permit system. When staff at agencies leave or experience vacancies, partners recommend improved information sharing within cross-agency systems to better record project status and continue progress.
- **Predictable outcome and timing** – Partners expressed concern that the timing and pace of permits varied widely depending on the applicant's staff capacity. As community-based and local developers seek to take advantage of new funding opportunities, ensuring a more predictable, consistent outcome - especially for new and emerging developers/contractors - will benefit the development community. The more certainty the City can offer in the development process, the more confidence, optimism, and risk can be assumed by applicants.

We look forward to continued improvement with the new system and applaud the progress to date. Feel free to contact Jessica Sorrell, Programs, Associate Director at 410-230-2137 with more questions or information.

Sincerely,

Jessica Sorrell,
Programs, Associate Director

CC: David Bowers, VP and Market Leader, Mid-Atlantic Market
Melissa Bondi, Senior Director, Mid-Atlantic Market

Enterprise Community Partners

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Melinda Campbell
3246 Abell Ave 1F
Baltimore, MD 21218

July 21, 2025

Baltimore City Council
100 N Holliday St
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing with regard to 25-0003R - Informational Hearing - Permit Reforms. For the last five months, I have been continuously frustrated with the permitting process of the city. I do not have any experience with the old system since I only recently bought a home, but I can definitively say the new process is not working well.

While attempting to get my porch roof to function properly (it was not draining correctly back in February, instead creating interesting ice sculptures on the outside of my drainpipe), I received a stop work order. Since replacing roof tarring does not need a permit, the roofers were in a tricky situation when they realized how much rotten wood I had underneath the tar. The plan was to simply swap in good wood for the rotted pieces. However, the work was forced to stop, so instead the workers had to tarp over my porch.

I immediately applied for the permit but then heard nothing. I called the numbers on the stop work order, the letter I received about the stop work order, and what I found on the city's website. No one answered or returned my voicemails. When I finally had a day I could go down to the permit office at the end of March, I was sent to three different locations before a lovely woman whose name I did not get dragged me over to Franc Udent's office, and he helped to get the next step rolling, informing me of the next steps I should take, which I completed.

It wasn't until May that I heard from the permitting office again. Meanwhile, we had some violent storms this spring, and tarps could not keep the water out. The basement ceiling was damaged, the concrete on my steps eroded, and my porch continued to rot.

Many of my neighbors suggested I speak with Councilwoman Ramos, and one stepped in on my behalf at our neighborhood Memorial Day picnic. After sending her my information, action was taken on my permit application the next day. I am grateful to the councilwoman, but it should not require someone's intervention for this process to flow.

Eight days after the lead reviewer finalized approval and I was able to submit the final documents, I had not heard anything other than receiving an email multiple times that told me to submit the documents (which I already had). I again had to contact Councilwoman

Ramos before I could get anywhere further. In response to her email, Shenika Lewis sent me instructions for a second way to upload the documents, which I followed. Milan Rai then told me to resubmit them, again. Once I said it had been done, the permit application finally landed in the final stage, I paid the fees, and the permit was issued.

Somehow, the frustration does not stop here. I followed the instructions in the letter I received about the stop work order to find out how to get it removed. After three calls to different numbers I was given, someone was able to tell me the fine was not applied to the permit fee, so I emailed the councilwoman and the team of city workers she had CC'd in all of our emails. One of them applied the fine, so I paid it. But it turns out she couldn't add both of them, so then I had to wait for the second one to be added. I paid, but somehow this is still not done.


The roofer called to put me on the schedule but told me there was a "Work Without Permit Penalty" fine on the permit they applied for (to fix the additional damage from the rain over the last few months). I sent another email to Councilwoman Ramos et al., and Ellysha Nedab informed me the notice would be abated after the work is completed. I replied that I needed the additional permit to fix the whole porch, so the permits office was asked to review the pending applications for my address and revise the fees.

I have a feeling the story of this porch repair is not completed, but as the hearing is tomorrow, I cannot tell you how it ends. One thing I know is that the repair cost has tripled while I waited for the permit office to check all the boxes, so I have had to delay other necessary work on my house.

Clearly, the permit reforms were ineffective. The system is convoluted and confusing, not only for a resident like me but also for the workers inside the system. I have had city workers look at my file and wonder what a comment another worker wrote meant. I have had others just shake their heads or whistle when they see all the chaos going on.

I am a rule-abiding, highly educated person who cannot figure the permitting system out on her own, so I can only imagine how other residents must feel when they try to navigate this morass. I also have experience managing complex workflows and making processes efficient, so I know this is not the best Baltimore can do. Please figure out a way to make permitting easier and more accessible.

Thank you,



Melinda Campbell
Abell resident