




MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 20, 2021
TO: Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Colin Tarbert, President and CEO 
POSITION: Support
SUBJECT: City Council Bill No. 21-0118
Area of Special Sign Control – Designation – North Harbor

INTRODUCTION

The Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) is reporting on City Council Bill No. 20-0118 introduced by Councilmembers Costello and Stokes at the request of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore.

PURPOSE

For the purpose of approving the application of Downtown Partnership of Baltimore to designate an Area of Special Sign Control known as the North Harbor District.

BRIEF HISTORY

The Baltimore City Zoning code provides for Areas of Special Signage Control for certain commercial areas that present a unique character that could be enhanced with the application of sign standards that depart from the typical signage requirements elsewhere in the Code. The process for approving an Area of Special Signage Control is essentially two parts: 1) designation of an area and its boundaries, and 2) the development of a Signage Plan for the designated area. This Ordinance would complete the first step of the process, and designate an area comprised of the Central Business District roughly bounded Howard St. (West), Baltimore Street (North), President Street (East) and Pratt Street (South), with some variation therein to include or exclude certain properties as appropriate.

BDC recognizes the value that an Area of Special Sign Control can bring to the area, and in particular would like to recognize the opportunity that it could provide to locally owned small businesses, including minority- and women-owned businesses who may not have the resources to obtain space on high-visibility signage on their own. The Downtown Partnership, through its IKE Kiosk and Downtown BOOST (Black-Owned and Occupied Storefront Tenancy) programs, has directly supported local businesses and, through its application for this signage area, stands to be an important advocate ensuring that these businesses can benefit from the increased signage opportunities the Area will provide.

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While this Ordinance will establish the Area boundaries, the specifics of the Signage Plan will need to be developed in conjunction with multiple City agencies and local stakeholders. This step remains the most important aspect of the process to ensure that any new signage is part of a single vision that enhances the overall environment of the Area. BDC looks forward to engaging in that effort, and supports the establishment of the Area’s boundaries so that the process can begin.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

AGENCY POSITION

The Baltimore Development Corporation **Supports** City Council Bill No. 21-0118.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kimberly Clark at kclark@baltimoredevelopment.com.

cc: Nina Themelis

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