



MEMORANDUM

STEPHANIE
RAWLINGS-BLAKE,
Mayor

PAUL T. GRAZIANO,
Executive Director, HABCD
Commissioner, HCD

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Karen Randle, *Executive Secretary*

From: Paul T. Graziano, *Commissioner*

Date: October 20, 2011

Re: **City Council Bill 11-0692 - Urban Renewal - Middle East - Amendment** _

The Department of Housing and Community Development has reviewed City Council Bill 11-0692, which was introduced for the purpose of amending the Urban Renewal Plan for Middle East to amend and clarify certain land uses, and to correct, clarify, and conform certain provisions concerning nonconforming uses and noncomplying structures; waiving certain content and procedural requirements; making the provisions of this Ordinance severable; providing for the application of this Ordinance in conjunction with certain other ordinances; and providing for a special effective date.

The Middle East Urban Renewal Plan (URP) was originally created in 1979, and has undergone several amendments. Presently, the Middle East URP imposes certain restrictions on non-conforming uses that have become confusing since the current amended Zoning Code has been adopted, which has resulted in the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA) to authorize a change in non-conforming use, but ultimately have a permit denied due to strict URP provisions. The net effect of these existing regulations and processes is that some vacant corner stores cannot be reestablished or be approved for a change in non-conforming use, meaning most will either remain vacant or only be converted to residential.

This bill would amend the URP to allow for changes in non-conforming use to remedy some of the aforementioned regulatory and process confusion and will provide an interim measure to remove a current barrier to providing walkable neighborhoods until TransForm Baltimore is enacted.

The Department of Housing and Community Development has no objection to the adoption of City Council Bill 11-0692 as proposed to be amended by the Planning Commission.

PTG:nb

cc: Ms. Angela Gibson, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*
Ms. Kaliope Parthemos, *Deputy Mayor*

