



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 20, 2024
TO: Ways & Means Committee
FROM: Colin Tarbert, President and CEO
POSITION: **Unfavorable**
SUBJECT: Council Bill 24-0590 - Zoning – Sign Regulations – C-5-DC Zoning District – Amendment

INTRODUCTION

The Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) is reporting on City Council Bill 24-0590 introduced by Councilmember Porter.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bill is to amend the current Sign Regulations in the Baltimore City Zoning Code to permit the construction of a free-standing pole sign (billboard) within the C5-DC Zoning District, provided that an Area of Special Signage Control is first established.

BRIEF HISTORY

This bill, as well as Council Bills 24-0588 and 24-0589 have been introduced together as a means to allow the construction of a large billboard in Parking Lot N next to M&T Bank Stadium. Currently, Sign Regulations prohibit this type of sign in the C5-DC Zoning District, which contains the stadium area as well as most of Downtown. This amendment would allow for the construction of large highway-sized billboards throughout the rest of the C5-DC Zoning District, when part of an Area of Special Signage Control.

The Baltimore City Zoning Code and Sign Regulations prohibits the additional construction of large freestanding billboards in the city. BDC is broadly supportive of the creation of an Area of Special Signage Control in and around the Stadiums and Entertainment District and modifications to the City's Sign Regulations that would allow for this type of sign in that area. Given that the area already features many large billboards, and they are a common feature typical to professional sports stadiums, a signage district in this area would help establish a consistent and high-quality signage environment.

However, potentially permitting the installation of billboards throughout Downtown would not only work against the intent of the City's existing Sign Regulations, but could potentially act as a direct impediment to broader economic development and revitalization efforts in Downtown. A billboard placed on an undeveloped lot can generate significant revenue for a property owner, who would therefore not be inclined towards developing the property in question to a higher and better use. Furthermore, the presence of a billboard can also deter redevelopment of adjacent properties due to the overall visual impact to the area.

In the interest of advancing the true goal of these bills to allow for the installation of billboard signs in and around the stadiums, BDC recommends considering a new zoning category just for the stadium and entertainment district where this type of sign could be allowed, and not risk compromising the signage intent for the larger Downtown area where this type of sign is entirely inappropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT [to BDC]

None.

AGENCY POSITION

The Baltimore Development Corporation respectfully submits an **unfavorable** report on City Council Bill 24-0590. If you have any questions, please contact Kim Clark at 410-837-9305 or KClark@baltimoredevelopment.com.

cc: Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Ty'lor Schnella, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

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