



Odette Ramos

Baltimore City Councilwoman

District 14

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100 N. Holliday Street, Room 553

Baltimore MD 21202

March 26, 2026

TESTIMONY

**25-0136 rezoning 3009 Greenmount Avenue from R-6 to C-2
SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Dorsey and Members of the Land Use and Transportation Committee:

I am writing to request your support for Council Bill 25-0136 which rezones 3009 Greenmount Avenue from R-6 to C-2. This particular property is the historic Parish House on the St. Johns in the Village Episcopal Church campus. Several years ago, the church closed, leaving the future of the campus uncertain.

The Baltimore Italian Cultural Center (BIT Center) was looking for significant space in the area for their numerous programs. I was insistent they make their headquarters in my district because of the exceptional work they do for our families, youth, and communities. Luckily, the introduction between Ms. Lapenta of The BIT Center and the Episcopal Diocese led to a significant partnership between the two. The Episcopal Diocese has since subdivided their property and transferred the Parish House to the BIT Center.

This rezoning is only for the part of the campus that is the Parish House now owned by the BIT Center. Churches can be in whatever zoning category, and in this case was R-6. Because the Parish House has only ever been used for church purposes, the uses that the BIT Center seeks would not be allowed even with a Neighborhood Commercial designation. Moreover, the neighborhood has been experiencing substantial shift. The new use fits nicely into our vision for Greenmount Avenue.

The BIT Center proposes using the site for several amazing purposes. First and foremost, their Be a Chef for A Day activities which provide cooking classes and provide food for those who need it most. Ms. Lapenta believes that stability and health begin with great food. In addition, they have the social enterprise Bmore Pasta, and several other programs. The most flexible zoning category for all of these uses is the C-2 zoning.

Better Waverly Community Organization has been involved with the conversations, and the entire community has been excited about the work being done at the old Parish House to bring the campus back to life.

My predecessor, Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke, envisioned that one day this St. Johns campus would be a place for the community to come together for gatherings and events, obtain needed resources, and celebrate community. The work that the BIT Center is doing is the first amazing giant step to realize this vision.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your approval of this request.

Sincerely,

Odette Ramos, Baltimore City Councilwoman, District 14