

BMORE **FAST**

*Facilitating Approvals and Streamlining Timelines
in Baltimore City*



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor



Facilitating Approvals and Streamlining Timelines

This comprehensive program of reforms will modernize and streamline Baltimore's development approval process, from acquisition to final inspection.

This plan consolidates initiatives already in progress (such as Housing's new permit software), opportunities to build on those successes, and much needed updates to all City processes that affect development.



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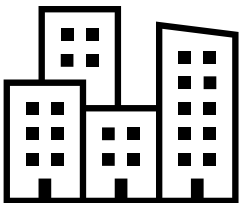
Baltimore faces a housing crisis and commercial corridor challenges that require immediate action.

With a groundbreaking \$3 billion investment plan to address vacant properties, we have an unprecedented opportunity to transform our city.

Now more than ever, we need
a permitting process that is:

Accessible.
Efficient.
Accountable.

Strategic Framework – Three Pillars



Strategic Pillar	BMORE FAST	BMORE INCLUSIVE	BMORE CONNECTED
Overview	Streamline City’s internal development processes and procedures to reduce unnecessary administrative barriers while maintaining essential oversight	Advancing zoning and building code reforms to create more opportunities for housing and commercial development across all neighborhoods while maintaining community character and preventing displacement	Leveraging partnerships with public, private, and philanthropic stakeholders to support implementation and expand resources for neighborhood revitalization

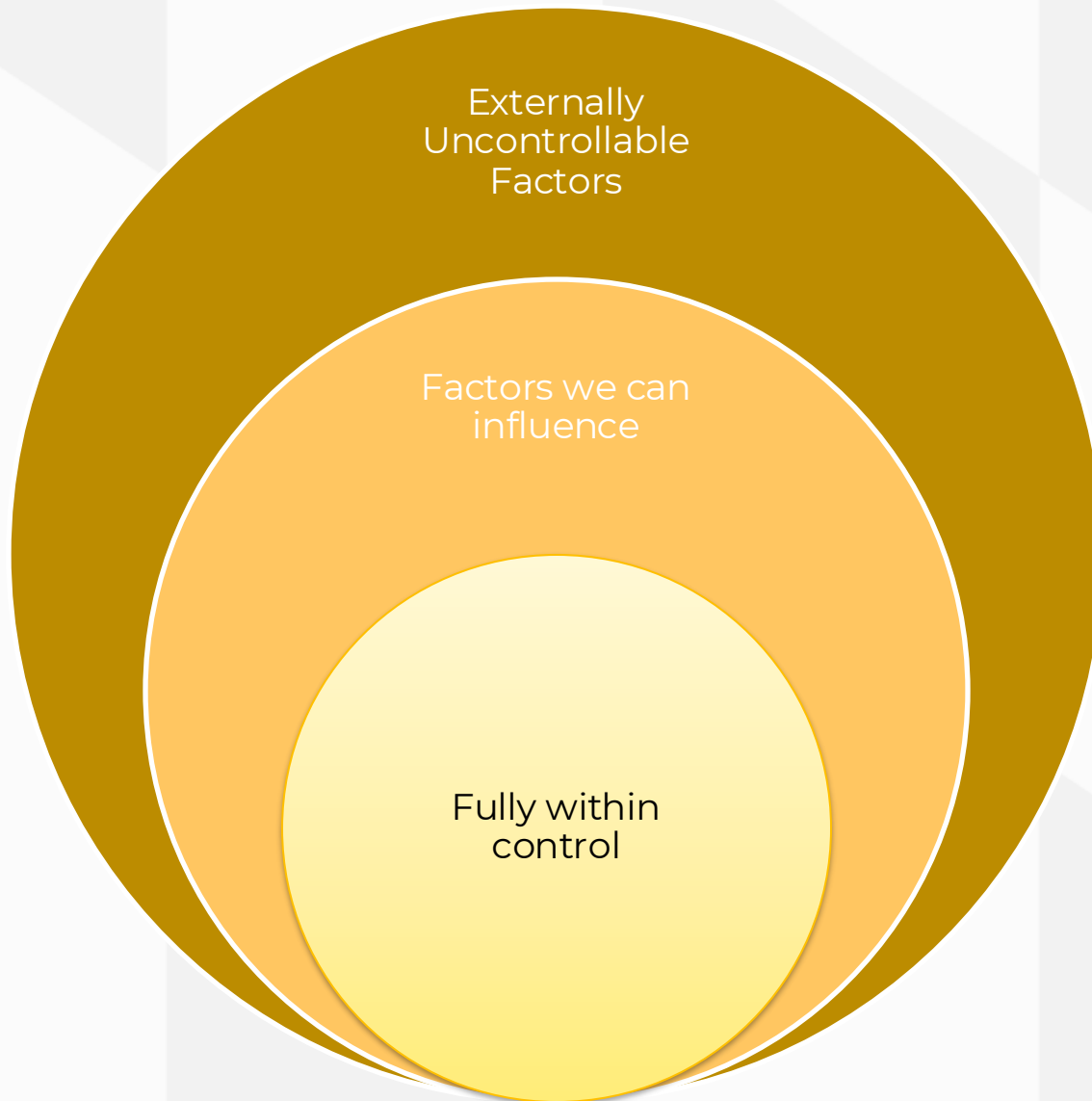
Why Development Reform Matters



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- Expanding housing options for residents at all income levels
- Revitalizing commercial corridors in every neighborhood
- Creating jobs and economic opportunity
- Directing resources toward construction rather than administrative overhead
- Research indicates demand for 5,300-7,100 new/renovated homes annually

Strategic Focus on Development Process Reform



ACCEPT & ADAPT

Cannot control or influence, but we must accept:

- Housing Market Trends
- Global supply chain issues
- Federal tax policies and funding levels

INFLUENCE

Cannot control, but we can influence:

- Utility company processes
- Trade licensing requirements
- Real estate market perceptions

CONTROL

We can control:

- Permit review timelines
- Internal city processes & coordination
- City code / ordinance / regulation
- Customer service



Foundation for Reform - Two Cornerstones

Cornerstone 1:

Director of Permitting and Development Services position

- Centralized oversight and accountability across agencies
- Cultural transformation toward facilitation mindset
- Objective mediation for process conflicts



WHAT JFK LEARNED ABOUT LEADERSHIP FROM A NASA JANITOR

Too often leaders focus on overly tactical communication — the what, how, and when — and forget to articulate the mission.



Plan Review - Workflow Routing Slip

Report Generated: **07/16/2024 08:00 AM**

TASK	TASK STATUS	REVIEW STATUS	CYCLE	ASSIGNED	ACCEPTED	COMPLETED	GROUP	USER	SUB TOTAL
Concept Submittal Respond and Resubmit	Completed		2	08/25/2023 05:16 PM	09/26/2023 12:49 PM	01/17/2024 10:12 AM	Applicant	[REDACTED]	144 days 17 hrs
Concept Submittal Response Review Task	Completed		2	01/17/2024 10:12 AM	01/18/2024 03:38 PM	01/18/2024 03:38 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	1 day 5.5 hrs
SWM-ESC (DPW) Concept Submittal Review Cycle #3	Completed	Corrections Required	3	01/18/2024 03:39 PM	01/25/2024 03:48 PM	01/29/2024 02:31 PM	SWM-ESC (DPW)	Michael Savage	10 days 23 hrs
Concept Submittal Review Complete Task	Completed		3	01/29/2024 02:31 PM	01/30/2024 08:25 AM	01/30/2024 08:26 AM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	0 days 18 hrs
Concept Submittal Respond and Resubmit	Completed		3	01/30/2024 08:26 AM	03/05/2024 09:08 AM	03/05/2024 09:53 AM	Applicant	[REDACTED]	35 days 1.5 hrs
Concept Submittal Response Review Task	Completed		3	03/05/2024 09:53 AM	03/05/2024 11:44 AM	03/05/2024 11:45 AM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	0 days 2 hrs
Concept Submittal Respond and Resubmit	Completed		3	03/05/2024 11:45 AM	03/05/2024 12:32 PM	03/05/2024 01:57 PM	Applicant	[REDACTED]	0 days 2 hrs
Concept Submittal Response Review Task	Completed		3	03/05/2024 01:57 PM	03/05/2024 02:29 PM	03/05/2024 02:30 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	0 days 0.5 hrs
SWM-ESC (DPW) Concept Submittal Review Cycle #4	Completed	Corrections Required	4	03/05/2024 02:30 PM	03/21/2024 08:13 AM	03/22/2024 10:34 AM	SWM-ESC (DPW)	Michael Savage	16 days 20 hrs
Concept Submittal Review Complete Task	Completed		4	03/22/2024 10:34 AM	03/23/2024 10:59 AM	03/23/2024 10:59 AM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	1 day 0.5 hrs
Concept Submittal Respond and Resubmit	Completed		4	03/23/2024 10:59 AM	03/28/2024 02:06 PM	04/01/2024 11:06 AM	Applicant	[REDACTED]	9 days 0 hrs
Concept Submittal Response Review Task	Completed		4	04/01/2024 11:06 AM	04/01/2024 11:13 AM	04/01/2024 11:13 AM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	0 days 0 hrs
SWM-ESC (DPW) Concept Submittal Review Cycle #5	Completed	Approved	5	04/01/2024 11:13 AM	04/10/2024 01:31 PM	04/10/2024 01:47 PM	SWM-ESC (DPW)	Michael Savage	9 days 2.5 hrs
Concept Submittal Review Complete Task	Completed		5	04/10/2024 01:47 PM	04/11/2024 02:51 PM	04/11/2024 02:51 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	1 day 1 hr
Site Development Submittal Upload	Completed		5	04/11/2024 02:51 PM	04/19/2024 02:00 PM	04/19/2024 03:23 PM	Applicant	[REDACTED]	8 days 0.5 hrs

Plan Review - Workflow Routing Slip

Report Generated: **07/16/2024 08:00 AM**

TASK	TASK STATUS	REVIEW STATUS	CYCLE	ASSIGNED	ACCEPTED	COMPLETED	GROUP	USER	SUB TOTAL
Site Development Submittal Prescreen Task	Completed		5	04/19/2024 03:23 PM	04/23/2024 02:54 PM	04/23/2024 02:55 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	3 days 23.5 hrs
Site Development Submittal Assign Reviewers Task	Completed		0	04/23/2024 02:55 PM	04/23/2024 03:06 PM	04/23/2024 03:07 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	0 days 0 hrs
Forest Conservation (BOS) Site Development Submittal Review Cycle #1	Completed	Corrections Required	1	04/23/2024 03:07 PM	05/03/2024 03:31 PM	05/04/2024 11:36 AM	Forest Conservation (BOS)	Rachel Whiteheart	10 days 20.5 hrs
SWM-ESC (DPW) Site Development Submittal Review Cycle #1	Completed	Corrections Required	1	04/23/2024 03:07 PM	05/08/2024 01:13 PM	05/10/2024 11:58 AM	SWM-ESC (DPW)	Michael Savage	16 days 21 hrs
Site Development Submittal Review Complete Task	Completed		1	05/10/2024 11:58 AM	05/10/2024 05:36 PM	05/10/2024 05:37 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	0 days 5.5 hrs
Site Development Submittal Respond and Resubmit	Completed		1	05/10/2024 05:37 PM	05/13/2024 08:05 AM	05/17/2024 04:02 PM	Applicant		6 days 22.5 hrs
Site Development Submittal Response Review Task	Completed		1	05/17/2024 04:02 PM	05/18/2024 05:41 PM	05/18/2024 05:42 PM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	1 day 1.5 hrs
Forest Conservation (BOS) Site Development Submittal Review Cycle #2	Completed	Approved with Conditions	2	05/18/2024 05:42 PM	05/31/2024 10:17 AM	05/31/2024 02:23 PM	Forest Conservation (BOS)	Rachel Whiteheart	12 days 20.5 hrs
SWM-ESC (DPW) Site Development Submittal Review Cycle #2	Completed	Corrections Required	2	05/18/2024 05:42 PM	05/23/2024 10:58 AM	05/29/2024 09:29 AM	SWM-ESC (DPW)	Michael Savage	10 days 16 hrs
Site Development Submittal Review Complete Task	Completed		2	05/31/2024 02:23 PM	06/03/2024 09:42 AM	06/03/2024 09:42 AM	Plans Review Supervisor	Kimberly Grove	2 days 19.5 hrs
Site Development Submittal Respond and Resubmit	Accepted		2	06/03/2024 09:42 AM	06/07/2024 09:36 AM		Applicant		42 days 23.5 hrs

Foundation for Reform - Two Cornerstones

Cornerstone 2:

Bmore FAST Advisory Group

- Diverse stakeholders from across development ecosystem
- Providing expertise and practical insights
- Supporting implementation and monitoring progress

- Market-rate and affordable housing developers
- General contractors and construction professionals
- Architects and design professionals
- Permit expeditors
- Civil engineers
- Real estate attorneys
- Environmental consultants
- Commercial and residential lenders
- Community development experts
- Real estate brokers
- Small business representatives
- City Council and Comptroller Representation

Four Key Reform Areas

Public Engagement & Access

These initiatives focus on making development processes more transparent and accessible to Baltimore residents and communities. By providing clear information and expanding opportunities for meaningful participation, these reforms help ensure development serves community needs.

Developer & Builder Support

These recommendations streamline processes for development professionals while maintaining necessary oversight. The reforms address key operational challenges identified through stakeholder feedback and performance analysis, creating more predictable and efficient pathways for project delivery.

Small Business & Emerging Developer Resources

These initiatives reduce barriers and provide targeted support for smaller-scale participants in Baltimore's development ecosystem. The reforms recognize that making processes work for small businesses and emerging developers is crucial for equitable economic growth.

City Operations & Capacity

These internal reforms strengthen Baltimore's institutional capability to support efficient development. By enhancing coordination and building staff capacity, these changes create the operational foundation for sustained improvement in development services.

Public Engagement & Access – Complete Initiatives List

- **Planning Academy Expansion Assessment:** Scaling our successful community education program to create more informed participation in development decisions.
- **Citizen's Guide to Development and Zoning:** Developing comprehensive resources explaining complex regulations in accessible language for all residents.
- **Enhanced Permits Website:** Redesigning digital experience with intuitive navigation and comprehensive resources for all users.
- **Expanding on Building Permits Call Center:** Building on success that increased answer rates from 10% to 98% within months of launch.
- **Standardized Department Directories:** Creating consistent formats for contact information across all development-related agencies.

Permit Call Center Success Example

Month	Answer Rate
November 2023	13.9%
December 2023	9.8%
January 2024	31.7%
February 2024	67.9%
March 2024	83.9%
April 2024	98.6%

*In April '24, the Permit Call Center spent **197 hours** answering **2771 calls**, averaging **4 minutes** per call*

Public Engagement & Access – Complete Initiatives List

- **LEP Access Initiative:** Expanding language accessibility with documentation in Baltimore's top five languages.
- **Virtual Office Hours for Plan Review Staff:** Creating scheduled online consultation opportunities for more efficient issue resolution.
- **Training Resources Portal:** Developing comprehensive educational resources across all development-related agencies.
- **Permit Review Time Transparency:** Publishing standard review times with accountability measures for missed deadlines.
- **Public Land Use & Liquor License Information Portal:** Creating a centralized online resource for tracking development projects, zoning decisions, and public hearings.



BALTIMORE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT

MARCH 1, 2025 – COUNCIL DISTRICT 1

March 1, 2025

1. [EPS Variances](#)
2. [Planning Board Meetings](#)
3. [Design Review Panel Meeting](#)
4. [Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board Meeting](#)
5. [Landmarks Preservation Commission Meeting](#)
6. [Recreation and Parks Board Meeting](#)
7. [Irish Music Festival](#)
8. [Women's Wellness Night](#)
9. [Small Area Plan Effort Underway for "Small Area 11"](#)
10. [Community Planning Institute Spring Cohort](#)
11. [Patapsco Sewershed Meter Basin 10 Rehabilitation](#)
12. [Patapsco Sewershed Meter Basin 7 Rehabilitation](#)
13. [Woodwind Sewage Pumping Station Rehabilitation](#)
14. [Catonsville Water Pumping Station Rehabilitation](#)
15. [Development Meetings and Zoning Hearings](#)

Baltimore County has a calendar with public hearings and major public works projects sorted by council district

Developer and Builder Support – Complete Initiatives List

- **Self-Certification and Third-Party Review Pilot:** Allowing qualified professionals to expedite routine approvals while maintaining safety standards.
- **PermitStat Implementation:** Data-driven performance management system bringing agencies together to identify and address bottlenecks.
- **Developer's Agreement Process Reform:** Modernizing requirements for work in the public right-of-way to reduce unnecessary delays.
- **Water Service Connection Requirements Reform:** Examining thresholds that trigger Developer's Agreement requirements and fixed fee structures.
- **Design Review Process Reform:** Establishing clearer review criteria and more predictable timelines for UDAAP review.
- **Historic Preservation Review Reform:** Creating better balance between preservation requirements and economic feasibility.



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

Self-Certification Program Program Overview

The Self-Certification Program allows a registered professional to bypass the normal plan review process and get permits in one to five business days. Participating professionals must meet minimum qualifications and attend a Self-Certification training class.

Professional Qualifications

- Architect or structural engineer registered in Arizona for at least three years to certify building plans
- Landscape architect registered in Arizona for at least three years to certify landscape plans
- Professional civil engineer registered in Arizona for at least three years to certify grading and drainage plans
- Successful completion of self-certification training from the Planning & Development Department

The City of Phoenix has a well-regarded Self Certification Program

Developer's Agreement Process
July 2015

Right of Way Services Division
Land Conveyance Section
Abel Wolman Municipal Building Room 204
200 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Ph: 410-396-3667

A Developer's Agreement is required for work done in the public right of way or which will be maintained by the City of Baltimore ("City") including 3-inch or larger water services, water mains, developments which require ten (10) or more water supply services of any size, sanitary or storm drain extensions, conduit, or road construction. To downsize water meters 2-inches and smaller in meter size, a Developer's Agreement is not required; a "Water Meter Downsize Request Form for Meters 2-inches and Smaller" can be used instead.

Refer to the Appendix for projects that can be done under a permit rather than a Developer's Agreement, but still require engineering plans that are signed and sealed by a Professional Engineer registered in the State of Maryland.

City Regs mandate DA for 3" or larger water meter service

Developer and Builder Support – Complete Initiatives List

- **Infrastructure Bond & Surety Release Reform:** Developing standardized processes for closing out projects and releasing infrastructure bonds.
- **Utility Coordination Program:** Establishing formal coordination with all major utilities to prevent cascading delays.
- **Major Projects Coordination Committee:** Enhanced support for complex development projects with significant economic impact.
- **Board of Estimates Approval Streamlining:** Identifying opportunities to reduce delays for routine approvals.
- **Trade Licensure Reform Initiative:** Creating appropriately scaled licensing pathways for residential rehabilitation work.
- **Tax Credit Implementation Reform:** Addressing timing misalignment between tax credit applications and property reassessment schedules.

License Requirements - Electricians

An applicant for a **master license**:

To take a master electrician's license examination, the applicant must have been engaged or employed regularly and principally in providing electrical services for all types of electrical equipment and apparatuses for at least seven years under the direction and supervision of:

- a Maryland licensed master electrician, or
- a similarly qualified employee of a governmental unit.

The state board may allow an applicant up to three years of credit towards the required experience with proof that the applicant has completed a formal course of study or professional training in electrical installation comparable to the required experience.

Under existing Maryland regulations, only master electricians can pull electrical permits, requiring seven years of experience plus examination.

Small Business & Emerging Developer Resources – Complete Initiatives List

- **Small and MWBE Developer Support Programs:** Enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building for small, minority, and women-owned businesses.
- **Pre-approved Plans and Documents:** Standard designs for typical rowhouse renovations to reduce costs and accelerate approvals.
- **Implement Minor Variance Process:** Administrative approval pathway for uncontested minor variance requests to reduce processing times.
- **Minor Privilege Reform:** Modernizing approvals for elements that encroach into the public right-of-way like stairs, cornices, and signs.

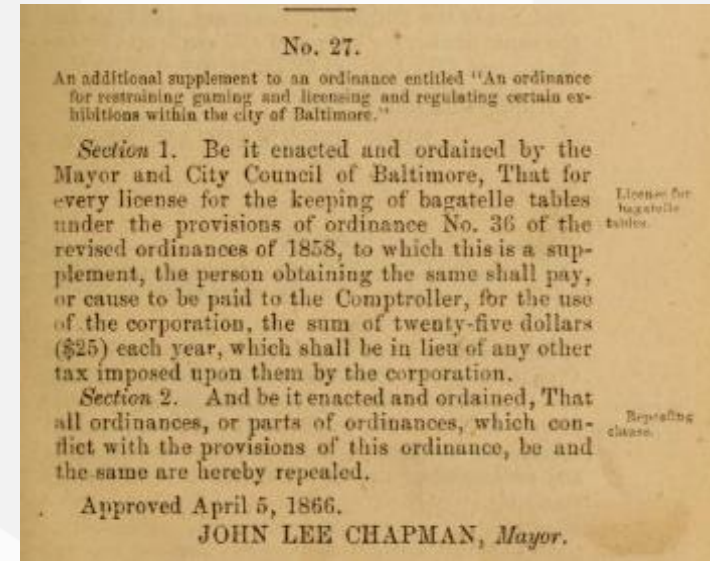
DEVELOPHER BALTIMORE

RealDev-School by O'Hara Development Partners
CDC will offer an immersive 5-month real estate development education program for women seeking to build wealth, legacy, and disrupt a traditionally dominated industry by forging a more diverse and equitable path for all.



Small Business & Emerging Developer Resources – Complete Initiatives List

- **Business License Coordination:** Aligning city and state processes to reduce duplication and confusion for business owners.
- **License Requirement Review:** Systematic evaluation of licensing requirements that lack clear connections to public health or safety.
- **Small Business Permitting and Licensing Website:** Comprehensive resource for navigating city requirements when starting or expanding a business.



Failure to review/update license statutes leads to outdated requirements like to obtain a license for a bagatelle table.

Part 1 Billiards

§ 2-1. License required.

(a) *In general.*

No billiard, bagatelle, pool, manhattan, klondike, or rondo table may be erected, set up, kept, or in any respect whatever used for the purpose of gain or public entertainment within the City without a license previously obtained from the Director of Finance.

(b) *Term.*

Every license granted under this section terminates on January 1 annually.

(c) *Fee.*

For every license granted under this section, the person obtaining it shall pay to the Director of Finance for the use of the City \$130 for each billiard, bagatelle, pool, manhattan, klondike, or rondo table.

City Operations & Capacity – Complete Initiatives List

- **Office of Zoning Administrator Reorganization:** Embedding within Department of Planning to create stronger alignment with planning priorities.
- **Comprehensive Staffing Assessment:** Examining workload data and staff capacity to identify areas needing additional resources.
- **Building Permit Requirements Update:** Clarifying when permits and professional design services are required for different project types.
- **Lien Release Process Reform:** Proactively clearing liens on city-acquired properties rather than waiting for potential sales.
- **Unpermitted Work Enforcement:** Developing enhanced strategies to address property flippers who conduct unpermitted renovations.
- **Real Estate Document Processing Assessment:** Improving coordination with Clerk of Court to prevent deed recordation bottlenecks.

WORK EXEMPT FROM PERMIT

Exemption from permit requirements of this code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner in violation of the provisions of the *Building, Fire, and Related Codes of Baltimore City 2015* (BFRCBC) Section 105.2, *International Building Code 2015* (IBC) Section 105.2, *International Residential Code 2015* (IRC) Section R105.2, or any other laws or ordinances of this jurisdiction.

In general alterations require a permit, but ordinary repairs which are in fact maintenance activities generally do not require a permit.

For One-and Two-Family Dwellings

Permits shall not be required for the following:

Building:

- ✓ Water tanks supported directly upon grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons (18 927L) and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed 2 to 1.
- ✓ Painting (unless exterior and in a CHAP area), papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, counter tops and similar finish work, minor repairs or patching of drywall or plaster, and replacement of hardwood floors.
- ✓ Prefabricated swimming pools that are less than 24 inches (610 mm) deep. **(Contact the Zoning Department at 410-396-4126 in reference to Zoning approval for this project).**
- ✓ Swings and other playground equipment. **(Contact the Zoning Department at 410-396-4126 in reference to Zoning approval for this project).**
- ✓ Removal of debris except in cases of interior or exterior demolition.
- ✓ Boarding of exterior openings with plywood.
- ✓ Replacing roof shingles (unless exterior and in a CHAP area)
- ✓ Replacing roof tarring
- ✓ Installing a temporary door on a structure subject to a vacant building notice.

The current list of work exempt from permit on DHCD's site dates to 2015. With call center model, should be able to dynamically update with FAQs re permits.

Success Metrics



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- Reduced processing times for permits and approvals
- Increased predictability in development timelines
- Enhanced accessibility of services for all stakeholders
- Better coordination between city agencies and external partners
- Expanded opportunities for small and emerging developers

Next Steps

- Timeline for implementation of key recommendations
- Potential legislative actions needed from Council
- Invitation for Council input and collaboration



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Questions

