



January 12, 2022

Bill: Building Code - Cool Roofs (21-0160)

Position: Favorable with Amendment

Dear Committee Chair Schleifer and Members of the Committee,

Blue Water Baltimore's mission is to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. We respectfully request your support and expansion of Building Code - Cool Roofs (21-0160).

The climate crisis poses significant risks to Baltimore's communities, waterways, and environment. One of the most noticeable effects of climate change is rising temperatures, which present a dangerous and growing threat to the city. In 2021, Baltimore experienced over 50 days with temperatures above 90 degrees.¹ By 2080, Baltimore's climate is projected to resemble that of Cleveland, Mississippi, a town that is 9.1°F warmer than Baltimore.²

Like other cities, Baltimore concentrates heat more than surrounding areas due to the large amount of concrete and paved surfaces within its jurisdiction. This dynamic is known as the urban heat island effect, and it does not affect people equally. Formerly redlined neighborhoods have the least amount of trees and green space and are therefore the hottest neighborhoods in Baltimore. For example, Broadway East has six times less tree canopy than Roland Park, which can lead to significant temperature differences between these two neighborhoods.³ Hotter temperatures also increase energy bills, creating another burden for low-income residents who are most impacted by rising temperatures.

The negative impacts of rising temperatures don't stop there. As rain water flows across the hot, impervious surfaces coating our City, it travels into the storm drains and discharges directly into the Jones Falls, Gwynns Falls, Herring Run, and the Baltimore Harbor. This unnaturally hot rainwater creates inhospitable conditions for the creatures that depend upon a balanced aquatic ecosystem. When our streams and rivers are too hot to sustain native fish and bug species, they become a breeding ground for excessive algae growth and invasive species that destroy our environment.

By requiring reflective, solar, or green roofs on new buildings and additions to existing buildings, this ordinance will help reduce the urban heat island effect in Baltimore while increasing renewable energy generation and lowering energy bills. Green roofs also protect Baltimore's waterways from pollution by reducing the volume of stormwater runoff flowing from the tops of buildings.⁴

Increasing the number of cool roofs is a common sense step for the City of Baltimore to take and should be one component of Baltimore City's response to the climate crisis. To make more of an

¹ Linh Bui. (2021). [What Could Climate Change Mean For Baltimore And Maryland?](#) CBS Baltimore.

² Appalachian Laboratory. (2019). [Climate Of North American Cities Will Shift Hundreds Of Miles In One Generation.](#) University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

³ Roxanne Ready, et al. (2019). [No trees, no shade, no relief as climate heats up.](#) Capital News Service.

⁴ Blue Water Baltimore. (2019). [Green Stormwater Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities in Baltimore.](#)

impact, we urge the City Council to amend Bill 21-0160 to include all new construction, not just new buildings and additions owned or funded by the City. Baltimore City must ensure equitable and affordable access to reflective, solar, and green roofs so that all residents can make the most of this important tool for climate mitigation and resilience.

We urge a favorable report on Bill 21-0160 with this suggested amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor Smith-Hams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Taylor Smith-Hams
Advocacy & Outreach Senior Manager