

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 22-0140R
(First Reader)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Ramos, Middleton, Bullock, Porter, Cohen, Dorsey

Introduced and read first time: October 3, 2022

Assigned to: Economic and Community Development Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Housing and Community Development, Baltimore City Fire Department, City Administrator

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing - Permit Reforms**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Department of Housing and Community
4 Development, the Office of the City Administrator, the Baltimore City Fire Department,
5 Office of the Fire Marshal, and other relevant parties to provide information on reforms to the
6 Department of Housing and Community Development’s permit process.

7 One of the factors that will successfully lead Baltimore City toward its goal of removing
8 vacant and abandoned properties is an efficient and effective permit process to review
9 applications, conduct inspections, and issue permits in a timely manner for homeowners,
10 community development organizations, and developers. In the interest of expanding our Main
11 Street business corridors, the City needs a permit process that can meet challenging demands.

12 Contractors, homeowners, and small businesses across the City have reported difficulties
13 working with the Department of Housing and Community Development’s “One-Stop Shop
14 Permit Center” (the “Center”) including timely processing, approval of plans, scheduling
15 inspections, and treatment by inspectors, among additional complaints. Businesses along our
16 Main Street corridors also report difficulty navigating the permit process, citing instances where
17 they are told one thing by the Center and something different by the Fire Marshal or other
18 entities. Finally, there have also been examples of building plans being approved by the Center
19 and then inspections failing because the plans should not have been approved initially.

20 In addition, there has been a sharp increase in work completed without permits. When
21 contractors avoid the permits process they may end up doing substandard work in our
22 communities and put residents in danger. Certain contractors even refuse to do business in the
23 City, which leaves residents and businesses with fewer options to complete work

24 These instances offer just a few examples of issues encountered with the Center and City
25 permit process overall. While there is an intention to reform the Center, this hearing is necessary
26 to give the public an opportunity to outline the challenges they have faced in navigating the
27 permit process, as well as to allow the Department of Housing and Community Development to
28 detail the reforms they will commit to in order to improve the Center.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

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1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the
2 Baltimore City Council invites representatives from the Department of Housing and Community
3 Development, the Office of the City Administrator, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Office
4 of the Fire Marshal, and other relevant parties to provide information on reforms to the
5 Department of Housing and Community Development’s permit process

6 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Commissioner
7 of the Department of Housing and Community Development, the City Administrator, the Chief
8 of the Baltimore City Fire Department, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.