

<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	Berke Attila, Director
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of General Services 200 N. Holliday Street, Rm 800
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 22-0130R

CITY OF  
BALTIMORE  
**MEMO**



DATE:

May 17, 2023

**TO** The Honorable President and Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400, 100 North Holliday Street

**Position: Favorable**

The Department of General Services (DGS) is in receipt of and reporting herein on City Council Bill 22-0130R: Informational Hearing – Routine Maintenance of City-Owned Lots and Buildings. We request a favorable report on this bill.

**Legislation Background/Explanation**

This purpose of this resolution is to bring together key City agencies and other interested parties to discuss the current condition of City-owned lots and buildings, how to improve maintenance therein, and the impact of poorly-maintained City-owned lots and buildings on Baltimore City.

**DGS Comments**

**Background – DGS’ Facilities Maintenance Division**

The Facilities Maintenance Division (FMD) within DGS is responsible for managing and maintaining over six (6) million square feet of City-owned property. This includes both the operational facilities needed for service delivery and surplus facilities that the City intends to dispose of either through sale or demolition. FMD also includes real estate services for DGS. The Division’s ongoing aim is to improve operations to reduce expenditures by embracing preventative maintenance and proactive measures that will reduce reactive work.

**Downtown Campus – A Contextual Snapshot**

Our operational facilities largely include the City’s downtown campus (~1.7M SF), which houses many of the City’s own offices as well as several public-facing spaces upon which Baltimore City residents rely. These facilities vary in age construction type, and several are historic in nature and require additional ongoing care and maintenance.

Facilities such as Benton, Cummings, Abel Wolman, and 7 E. Redwood collectively provide work spaces for over 2,000 City employees. Many of these buildings were built before central air and other modern amenities were standard; as a result, many systems (such as HVAC and telecom equipment) were added after construction and have required modification of the original structure. Changes such as these make subsequent repairs costlier throughout the life span of the building. Our downtown campus will require considerable and frequent investment into the future to ensure adequate operation and maintenance.

DGS approaches building maintenance in several ways. (See Table 1 below.) Certain items are required by law to be inspected annually; these include elevators, fire systems, sprinklers, and certain types of extinguishers. These need to be inspected and certified by a licensed technician every year. Boiler systems are inspected every two years.

DGS also conducts regular preventative maintenance. This is work that follows the manufacture’s recommended specification to preserve the life of the equipment and may include filters or other parts replacement, lubrication, or other system checks.

**Table 1**

<b>Component / System</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Frequency of Inspection</b>
<i>Boiler</i>	<i>Inspection</i>	<i>Biennially</i>
<i>HVAC</i>	<i>Preventative maintenance</i>	<i>6 months</i>
<i>Elevator</i>	<i>Inspection</i>	<i>Annually</i>
<i>Fire system</i>	<i>Inspection</i>	<i>Annually</i>
<i>Sprinkler</i>	<i>Inspection</i>	<i>Annually</i>
<i>Extinguisher</i>	<i>Inspection</i>	<i>Varies by type; annually and every 6 months</i>

The last type of work that is done is corrective; this means the system or equipment is reaching (or has reached) the end of its useful life. To lower the amount of corrective work required in our buildings, DGS continues to request CIP (Capital Improvement Program) funds while we continue to conduct corrective maintenance where needed. We recognize that many City employees work in locations that have not seen any capital improvement in several years, and we are exploring alternatives to improve the conditions of these buildings.

**Surplus Schools – Challenges and Opportunities**

In total, the City’s surplus schools account for roughly a third of DGS’ total facilities portfolio, and the management of these facilities is unique and separate from the rest of the portfolio.

By definition, surplus schools are no longer adequate for use as public education facilities and many are in areas of declining population and enrollment. When DGS receives these facilities, they have already suffered decades of disinvestment and are no longer suitable for municipal use without significant investment in both the structure and its systems.

As the steward of these facilities, DGS is compelled to keep them as well-maintained as we possibly can. This includes repairing any damage to the façades, securing against vandalism and theft, providing mowing and landscaping, addressing public safety issues (e.g. playgrounds), and ensuring that any trash or illegal dumping is quickly addressed. This does not leave any room for capital improvements or any investment in the structure or systems outside of addressing the aforementioned public safety issues.

As DGS is an agency primarily tasked with supporting other City agencies, our efforts have always been aimed at providing support to those tenants. Receipt of surplus schools (currently 18 facilities at 1.7M SF) has not included additional staffing to manage the multitude of requests we receive for these properties. DGS relies on vendors to provide many of these services including security, mowing, landscaping, fencing and fence repair, boarding, etc.

DGS is very much aware of the current condition of surplus school facilities and how inadequate maintenance can affect the adjacent communities. We receive calls from Baltimore residents regarding tall grass, trash, illegal dumping, and generally unsafe conditions at these schools. To that end, we are employing new tactics to reduce the complaints we receive. DGS recently submitted an emergency requisition for a physical security panel system which will be attached to every door and window opening on the vacant schools. Our hope is that this will reduce the number of break-ins that has resulted in the facilities being stripped of their copper and electrical components. We estimate that this service will cost between \$250-275k per year based on our current inventory. In addition, we have begun to install fencing around the facilities and gating to the parking areas to reduce illegal dumping and other nuisance

complaints. This one-time cost is approximately \$20-25K per school.

We hope that these new measures will reduce theft, vandalism, and illegal dumping, and the consequent complaints from constituents. These measures, in addition to working with Procurement to resolve vendor payment issues, are critical to maintaining the integrity of our communities and preventing further disinvestment.

### **Conclusion**

The Department of General Services requests a favorable report on City Council Bill 22-0130R and looks forward to discussing further with the Public Safety and Government Operations Committee.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact DGS' Legislative Liaison Annie Fullas at [annie.fullas@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:annie.fullas@baltimorecity.gov) or at 667-208-0380.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Berke Attila".

Berke Attila

Director, DGS