

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 25-0003R
(First Reader)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Ramos and President Cohen
Cosponsored by: Councilmembers Parker, Dorsey, Conway, Schleifer, Middleton, Torrence,
Gray, Bullock, Porter, Blanchard, Jones, and Glover

Introduced and read first time: January 13, 2025

Assigned to: Legislative Investigations Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Housing and Community Development,
Baltimore City Information Technology, Office of the City Administrator, Fire Department

A BILL 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, the
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 **Recitals**

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

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

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

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

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1 These instances offer just a few examples of issues encountered with the Center and City
2 permit process overall. DHCD has been working on a new permitting system for the past year
3 and a half, with the promise of implementation by February of 2025. Public hearings to
4 understand the new system, and hear from the public on how it is working, is important to help
5 DHCD get the process right. It is the intent of the Baltimore City Council to hold hearings on
6 this topic periodically throughout the year.

7 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
8 Baltimore City Council invites representatives from the Department of Housing and Community
9 Development, the Office of the City Administrator, the Baltimore City Fire Department, Office
10 of the Fire Marshal, and other relevant parties to provide information on reforms to the
11 Department of Housing and Community Development’s permit process.

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