



## Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY\*

CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL        R  
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Henry

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning  
**Investigative Hearing - Urban Modular Home Factory**

FOR the purpose of scheduling an investigative hearing on the feasibility of Baltimore City creating and operating an urban modular home factory; requesting the Commissioner of Housing to explore the efficacy of modular homes in urban areas; and asking the Director of Finance to determine the fiscal impact of the City entering into the modular home building arena.

Recitals

A builder/developer of modular homes from Detroit describes the homes as ones in which approximately 80% of the construction takes place in a factory-controlled environment, but which is built with the same materials and to the same local building codes that govern site-built homes, and holds that modular construction is ideal for the challenges faced in urban areas because, in part, it is:

- Neighborhood friendly - Since most of the homes' construction occurs off-site there is less impact on the local environment; traffic from trucks and cars, delivery materials, subcontractors, and supervisors is dramatically reduced; and the noise pollution generated by site built techniques is reduced.
- Environmentally-friendly - The homes are energy efficient and have minimal construction impact. Construction items are collected in the plant for recycling, thus limiting landfill usage.
- Quick - There is a shorter lead time between order and delivery of the home - a typical modular home takes weeks to deliver; a site-built home can take many months or even years.
- Energy efficient - The greatest threat to energy efficiency is air filtration through seams and joints. In modular construction, this is minimized because entire walls, floors, and ceilings are constructed as large units or panels, resulting in fewer seams.

Urban areas across the country are turning to modular homes to respond to the shortage of affordable housing. In Seattle, modular apartments are being built to appeal to young professionals who are mobile, educated, adept with

technology, and environmentally aware. The 15 feet wide and 45 feet long modules can be coupled side by side to create apartments with up to 3 bedrooms. They can also be stacked up to 5 high and arranged lengthwise or widthwise in rows to create apartment buildings with up to 100 units.

Across the diverse topography of New York and well known areas of New York City, modular green homes are popular because they generally cost 10-35% less than site built homes, are better sealed and insulated, and improve overall energy performance and lower energy costs. And in 2 Detroit neighborhoods, the 74 modular homes built in partnership with community groups at a combined cost of \$17 million range in size from 1,450 to 1,650 square feet, making them compatible with existing neighborhood development.

Should Baltimore City opt to go into the modular home building business, experts estimate that 3,000 units could be produced yearly to eliminate blighted housing and vacant lots and that the enterprise would yield \$750 million in profit after 10 years and \$36 million in annual property taxes.

In addition to benefits to the City, there is an upside to residents as well. Renters in Baltimore would trade, for example, a \$600 payment for a \$500 mortgage and \$100 in property taxes for the advantage of owning a new home. There would be a greater commitment to the quality of life in neighborhoods populated by 30,000 new home owners and members of homeowners or condominium associations.

In a city where there are 30,000 vacant properties and where homeownership is only dream for low-income renters, every avenue to clearing the blight of vacant lots and providing the stability of homeownership must be explored.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body will schedule an investigative hearing on the feasibility of Baltimore City creating and operating an urban modular home factory; requests the Commissioner of Housing to explore the efficacy of modular homes in urban areas; and asks the Director of Finance to determine the fiscal impact of the City entering into the modular home building arena.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Commissioner of Housing, the Director of Finance, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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