

MEMORANDUM

February 3, 2017

TO: County Council

FROM: Amanda Mihill, Legislative Attorney *amihill*

SUBJECT: **Action:** Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team

Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee recommendation (3-0): enact Bill 25-16 with an amendment to remove the requirement to establish the Neighborhood Action Team, and replace it with an amendment to require the Executive to submit quarterly reports to the Council regarding blight and quality of life issues and require the Executive to hold semiannual meetings with County residents to discuss blight and quality of life issues.

Expedited Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team, sponsored by Lead Sponsors Councilmembers Leventhal and Navarro and Co-Sponsors Councilmembers Berliner and Elrich, was introduced on June 21, 2016. A public hearing was held on July 12 and a Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee worksession was held on August 1.

Bill 25-16 would require the Executive to create a Neighborhood Action Team and specify the duties and membership of the Neighborhood Action Team. A memorandum from the Lead Sponsors with additional background material is on ©5.

At the July 12 public hearing, the Council heard from 3 speakers supporting Bill 25-16 (©13-17). The Council has also heard from residents questioning the effectiveness of the Neighborhood Action Team as it was used in Connecticut Avenue Estates (©18-21).

Committee Discussion and Recommendation:

At the Committee worksession on August 1, the Committee discussed Executive branch concerns with Bill 25-16. Executive staff noted that there can be sensitive issues surrounding discussions of blight issues that may not be appropriate for discussion as part of the open meetings that could be required under the formal creation of a Neighborhood Action Team. Committee members

understood the concerns expressed, but felt that the benefit that would be provided in Bill 25-16 outweighed those concerns. Therefore, at its worksession, the Committee voted 2-0-1 (Councilmember Floreen abstaining) to enact Bill 25-16 with technical amendments.

Post-Worksession Developments

After the Committee worksession, the Executive sent a memorandum (see ©29-31) updating the Council on steps that the Executive committed to taking to respond to the issues Bill 25-16 was designed to address. The Executive noted that he was creating a Neighborhood Action Team that was set up substantially similar to the Team that would be required under Bill 25-16. In response, Councilmembers Navarro and Leventhal sent a memorandum to the Executive (see ©32-33) expressing appreciation for the Executive's efforts to establish the Neighborhood Action Team. However Councilmembers Navarro and Leventhal continued to believe that legislation was necessary to strengthen the reporting requirement for the activities that the Neighborhood Action Team undertakes. Therefore, Councilmembers Navarro and Leventhal circulated an amendment that would remove the requirement to establish the Neighborhood Action Team, and replace it with an amendment to require the Executive to submit quarterly reports to the Council regarding blight and quality of life issues and require the Executive to hold semiannual meetings with County residents to discuss blight and quality of life issues. This amendment was shared with Executive staff, who were supportive of it.

Committee recommendation. The amendment was circulated to all Committee members and all Committee members supported it. Therefore, the bill currently pending before the Council incorporates this amendment (see ©3, lines 30-37).

This packet contains:

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Bill No. 25 -16
Concerning: Housing and Building
Maintenance Standards –
Neighborhood Action Team
Revised: 2/2/2017 Draft No. 5
Introduced: June 21, 2016
Expires: December 21, 2017
Enacted: _____
Executive: _____
Effective: _____
Sunset Date: None
Ch. _____, Laws of Mont. Co. _____

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsors: Councilmember Leventhal and Navarro
Co-Sponsors: Councilmembers Berliner and Elrich

AN ACT to:

- (1) require the Executive to ~~[[create a Neighborhood Action Team]]~~ submit quarterly reports to the Council regarding quality of life issues;
- (2) ~~[[specify the duties and membership of the Neighborhood Action Team]]~~ require the Executive to hold semiannual meetings with County residents to discuss quality of life issues; and
- (3) generally amend County laws related to housing and building maintenance standards.

By adding

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 26, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards
Section 26-19

Boldface	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:

1 **Sec. 1. Section 26-19 is added as follows:**

2 **26-19. [[Neighborhood Action Team]] Outreach on Quality of Life Issues.**

3 [(a) Creation. The Executive must create a Neighborhood Action Team to
4 address visual blight and other quality of life issues in the County.

5 (b) Membership.

6 (1) The Neighborhood Action Team must include representatives
7 from:

8 (A) the Department of Transportation;

9 (B) the Department of Housing and Community Affairs;

10 (C) the Department of Permitting Services;

11 (D) the Department of Environmental Protection;

12 (E) the Police Department; and

13 (F) any other representative the Regional Services Center
14 Director or the Executive finds necessary.

15 (2) By September 1 of each year, the Executive must submit the
16 names and position titles of the members of the Neighborhood
17 Action Team to the Council.

18 (c) Duties. The Neighborhood Action Team must convene at the request of
19 any Regional Services Center Director or other individual designated by
20 the Executive. After convening, the Neighborhood Action Team must
21 create a plan with recommended actions to address visual blight and
22 other quality of life issues in any affected community.
23 Recommendations may include increasing enforcement of violations of
24 County laws related to housing maintenance standards, parking, and
25 solid waste disposal.

26 (d) Report. By December 1, 2017 and each December 1 thereafter, the
27 Executive must submit a report to the Council that includes activities,

accomplishments, plans, and objectives of the Neighborhood Action Team.]]

The Executive must submit quarterly reports to the Council that includes activities, plans, and objectives of Executive branch departments to address instances in which an aggregation of problems has led to diminished quality of life for affected residents in an affected community. Contents of the annual report can include recommendations to increase enforcement of violations of County laws related to housing maintenance standards, parking, and solid waste disposal. The Executive, or the Executive's designee, must hold semiannual meetings with County residents to discuss these problems.

Approved:

Roger Berliner, President, County Council

Date

Approved:

Isiah Leggett, County Executive

Date

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council

Date

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST REPORT

Bill 25-16

Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team

DESCRIPTION: Bill 25-16 would require the Executive to create a Neighborhood Action Team and specify the duties and membership of the Neighborhood Action Team.

PROBLEM: There has been an informal team meeting regarding these issues, but County residents would benefit from a team more formally established.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: To address blight and quality of life issues.

COORDINATION: Departments of Transportation, Housing and Community Affairs, Permitting Services, and Environmental Protection; the Police Department; Regional Services Centers

FISCAL IMPACT: To be requested

ECONOMIC IMPACT: To be requested

EVALUATION: To be researched.

EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE: To be researched.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: Amanda Mihill, Legislative Attorney, 240-777-7815

APPLICATION WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES: To be researched.

PENALTIES: N/A



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmembers

FROM: George Leventhal, Councilmember *George Leventhal*
Nancy Navarro, Councilmember *NN*

DATE: June 15, 2016

SUBJECT: Creating an interdepartmental Neighborhood Action Team to address blight and quality of life issues in Montgomery County.

In dual memoranda dated June 30, 2014 and July 9, 2014, we detailed important steps the county could take to begin to address issues of blight in and around the community of Connecticut Avenue Estates in Wheaton. Both memoranda called for an increased effort in county agency coordination to address issues of targeted code enforcement, overnight parking and illegal dumping enforcement and penalties. We sought participation from the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

While we are well aware that a working group, with members from these various departments, has been meeting on an informal basis about these issues, we believe it is vitally important that there be an accurate record of potential findings, new public education initiatives, and best practices moving forward. We believe this working group will be able to provide valuable community resources to residents, not just in the neighborhood of Connecticut Avenue Estates, but county-wide. Directors of each of the Regional Services Centers (RSC) would be able to call upon the newly established Neighborhood Action Team to evaluate problem areas in communities and to quickly establish a workable, time limited plan to address issues of blight that negatively affect residents' quality of life.

To that end, we are soliciting your support for the attached legislation, which we will introduce on Tuesday, to create an official, permanent Neighborhood Action Team. We believe this is an important first step in providing residents with a unified and uniformed response on issue of blight. We look forward to working with you on this issue.




MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

NANCY NAVARRO
COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 4

MEMORANDUM

June 30, 2014

TO: Councilmembers
Isiah Leggett, County Executive

FROM: Nancy Navarro 
Councilmember (District 4)

SUBJECT: Community Solutions: Neighborhood Revitalization Enhancement Initiative

On April 25, 2014, I sent a memo (attached) to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee (PHED) requesting targeted funding through a grant administered by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) for community building activities in District 4. Specifically, I requested \$120,000 for Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) to continue their excellent work in Glenmont (\$100,000) and for them to begin working in Connecticut Avenue Estates (\$20,000). The Connecticut Avenue Estates Civic Association sent a letter (attached), also dated April 25, 2014, in support of this funding. I also requested \$127,350 for Impact Silver Spring for work in the following areas:

- \$32,350 for Bel Pre;
- \$60,000 for Wheaton; and
- \$35,000 for Connecticut Avenue Estates in partnership with MHP.

I requested this funding because of the phenomenal track record MHP and Impact Silver Spring have in neighborhood building and community development activities throughout the County. I chose these areas because of the outreach activities my office has been doing with a broad range of residents who had requested these initiatives. These organizations have a history of engaging community members who do not traditionally attend civic association meetings or participate in community events. I have attached a letter from the Bluehill Neighborhood Opportunity Circle, a group representing close to 30 residents who live in the Connecticut Avenue Estates neighborhood who are interested in continuing their work with Impact Silver Spring.

It has recently come to my attention that a small group of concerned residents in three neighborhoods have expressed opposition to these DHCA contracts to nonprofits. I have met with these individuals and they expressed a desire that the County Government focus resources exclusively on enforcement of housing, permitting, parking, and solid waste code violations. After meeting with these individuals, touring their neighborhoods with them, and reviewing the

materials they provided to me, I am sympathetic to their desire for enhanced enforcement. However, I do not believe this is an "either/or" proposition. I strongly oppose any redirection of allocated funds because this sells the community short. Instead, I am in favor of an "and/both" approach that emphasizes positive community building and education activities, enhancing existing code enforcement, and developing new policy initiatives that will provide lasting solutions to the community issues I have observed firsthand.

There is no doubt that the Mid- and East-County has the vast majority of housing and code enforcement complaints in the County. MC311 data, compiled by the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) (attached), show that over the past two years, District 4 and District 5 have received 2,311 and 2,339 housing complaints, respectively. The next highest number of housing complaints is District 2 at 1,772. For code enforcement requests, District 4 and District 5 have received 4,224 and 4,256, respectively, over the past two years. District 2 comes in third, at 3,151 requests. I have attached the complete analysis by OLO. My view is that these numbers reflect symptoms of a larger societal issue that cannot be addressed through enforcement alone. An "enforcement only" approach would only serve to ostracize residents who are not aware of County laws and negatively divide neighborhoods. My belief is that government's role should be to bring people together by being welcoming to all people and educating those who are not aware of what is expected.

The comprehensive approach outlined below can serve as a roadmap for how I believe we can address community issues, not only in District 4, but throughout Montgomery County.

Community Development and Education

Developing an engaged community and educating residents about their rights and responsibilities as good neighbors is the cornerstone in solving all of the issues I have observed in many District 4 neighborhoods. County Government alone cannot facilitate the community building exercises that are needed to solve neighborhood problems. That is why our departments (Health and Human Services (HHS), DHCA, and others) contract with nonprofit organizations to do much of this important work. Working with and strengthening existing civic associations and neighborhood structures are the core work of organizations such as MHP and Impact Silver Spring. They also serve as a liaison between neighborhoods and government entities. These groups listen to the concerns of residents and structure their activities based on those needs. For example, in neighborhoods where persistent crime is an issue, these groups can help organize "neighborhood watch" programs. Where there are housing code issues, they can help educate residents about how to be better neighbors. This work is critical to addressing the underlying issues in many neighborhoods.

Before the Council begins the FY16 Operating Budget process, I encourage DHCA to create an inventory of community-based nonprofits doing this type of work in the County. DHCA should also develop a quantitative assessment to measure the results of these organizations and objective criteria for determining what areas of the County would benefit most from these initiatives.

Targeted Code Enforcement

Residents often use the term "code enforcement" as a blanket phrase when describing quality of life issues in a neighborhood. Residents are sometimes frustrated when reporting these issues to MC311 or Council offices because the County department responding to a complaint depends on the nature of the complaint itself. Whether the request for service is directed to the

Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), DHCA, Department of Permitting Services (DPS), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Department of Transportation (DOT), or an outside agency, such as the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) or Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the constituent's goal is getting the problem resolved.

I propose creating an interdepartmental unit comprised of officials from across County Government to focus on quality of life issues in targeted neighborhoods. This unit would have at least one staff member from the Code Enforcement Section of DHCA, DPS, DEP, MCPD, and DOT. They would work as a team to increase proactive enforcement of housing code, parking, permitting, illegal dumping and other quality-of-life violations in areas identified by the County Executive as having the greatest need. This unit would help mitigate the "stove piping" or "silo" mentality that frustrates residents about government. The unit will be nimble enough to work in one or more high need area at a time and will complement—not replace—existing enforcement activities. I encourage the County Executive to recommend adequate funding in the FY16 Operating Budget, or sooner through a supplemental appropriation, to implement this proposal.

Overnight Parking

One of the most pervasive issues in several neighborhoods around Wheaton is the lack of overnight parking for residents in front of their homes. I observed orange construction cones in front of several homes in an effort to "reserve" street parking spaces. Under the County's current residential parking program, streets can "opt-in" to the program requiring permits during daytime hours. The purpose of this program is to prevent commuters taking public transit from parking on residential streets during the day. In neighborhoods where most homes do not have driveways and are not near transit, parking shortages are most prevalent in the evening and overnight hours.

In the coming weeks, I plan on working closely with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT) to explore ways of expanding the County's residential parking permit program. I believe the program should include an evening/overnight component in neighborhoods with single-family homes that do not have driveways. In the fall, I plan to introduce legislation that reflects these discussions with DOT and provides some relief for residents who cannot find parking near their homes in the evening.

Illegal Dumping Enforcement and Penalties

Illegal dumping is a serious quality of life issue for residents. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) does a very good job dealing with illegal dumping on a complaint-driven basis. However, the County needs to employ strategies that prevents and deters illegal dumping in the first place.

First, I propose a targeted illegal dumping public education campaign in high-incident neighborhoods. This campaign should be administered by DEP in conjunction with the County's Public Information Office (PIO). I encourage the County Executive to recommend funds in the FY16 Operating Budget to fund a broad-based, multilingual outreach effort utilizing various forms of media—including print advertising, radio, television and the internet.

Second, the County should aggressively pursue individuals who are dumping illegally in neighborhoods. Civic Associations, along with nonprofit organizations working in the

community, should form neighborhood watch groups to monitor dumping and report incidents to the Police in real time. MCPD should also dedicate resources to monitoring areas where illegal dumping is a chronic problem and actively engage in "sting" activities to identify individuals engaged in this behavior.

Finally, this fall I will introduce legislation that increases the minimum fine for illegal dumping in Montgomery County. Currently, the minimum fine for first-time offenders is \$500 and the maximum is \$1,000. My legislation will increase the minimum to \$750. Currently, the County is prohibited by State Law to increase the maximum fine. However, I will request that our State Delegation introduce legislation giving Montgomery County the authority to adopt laws that are consistent with the higher penalties for illegal dumping found in the Maryland Criminal Code. Currently, only Prince George's County and Calvert County have this authority under State Law.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

GEORGE LEVENTHAL
COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

MEMORANDUM

July 9, 2014

TO: Nancy Navarro

FROM: George Leventhal *George Leventhal*

SUBJECT: RE: Community Solution – Neighborhood Revitalization Enhancement Initiative

Thank you for your June 30 memorandum outlining proposals for dealing with parking, blight and other issues affecting Connecticut Avenue Estates and the surrounding Wheaton neighborhood. Your leadership on these issues is helping to improve the quality of life for these residents. You have engaged members of the community who had not had the opportunity to have their views presented. As you know, residents have sought assistance from at-large councilmembers in addition to their district member. While I largely agree with most of the points in your memorandum, I wanted to share some thoughts of my own.

With regard to community development and education, I understand that non-profit service providers may sometimes be better equipped than county government to work with diverse communities in a culturally competent way. As you will recall, during our budget discussions, I supported funding for Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) and Impact Silver Spring, but I also expressed a desire to see countywide criteria whereby contracts with these or other organizations for community development will be executed in the future. In addition, it is very important that we identify right away the deliverables we can expect from these contracts, and how they will be monitored.

Regarding targeted code enforcement, I believe it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. The county already seeks a strong presence in communities through our Regional Services Centers (RSC). As you well know, these offices suffered tremendous cuts to personnel during the recession, turning them into one man/woman shops staffed only by the

directors. Instead of creating a new position or office, I suggest that we work in the FY2016 budget to address staffing at our Regional Services Centers, realizing that the directors of these centers currently possess the knowledge of how to navigate multiple county departments. In the meantime, the county should launch a coordinated effort with existing staff from the appropriate departments to address and remediate the issues now.

I wholeheartedly agree with your points regarding overnight parking, and I look forward to working closely with you on the implementation of any changes to the county Department of Transportation's (DOT) policy regarding evening residential parking.

The issue of illegal dumping and enforcement will be one of the most important issues we face moving forward. While I agree the county can and should do more multilingual outreach, I also believe that the county needs to take a firm hand with individuals who violate county law. While an increase to the minimum fine amount would seem to be a deterrent, any fine amount is useless until an actual fine is issued. To that end, I would suggest a mandatory fine for repeat offenders.

Please understand that I recognize your role as the district councilmember and am eager to work collaboratively with you, other council colleagues and executive branch officials to show a united front and yield positive results for our residents.

CC: Craig Rice, President Montgomery County Council
Nancy Floreen, Councilmember
Hans Riemer, Councilmember
Marc Elrich, Councilmember
Roger Berliner, Councilmember
Cheri Branson, Councilmember
Phil Andrews, Councilmember
Diane Schwartz-Jones, Department of Permitting Services
Richard Nelson, Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Ana Lopez van Balen, Mid-County Regional Services Center



12200 Tech Road, Suite 250, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-1983 Phone: 301-622-2400 Fax: 301-622-2800 www.MHPartners.org

July 12, 2016

The Honorable Nancy Floreen
President, Montgomery County Council
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Floreen:

On behalf of Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP), please allow me to take this opportunity to express support for Bill 25-16 Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team.

MHP is honored to be a partner of the County's, and specifically the Department of Housing and Community Development's Focused Neighborhood Assistance program. Through this partnership we have worked with the County to address quality of life issues in Gaithersburg, Germantown, Glenmont, Bel Pre, Long Branch, and the North Wheaton communities of Connecticut Avenue Estates, Wheaton Hills, and Glenmont Forest. We have developed butterfly gardens, hosted National Nights Out and Block Parties, supported neighborhood associations, removed tons of trash, installed murals, provided new signage for businesses, and renovated vacant and abandoned homes.

One common denominator through all of these communities and initiatives has been the critical nature of collaboration and communication between County agencies, nonprofit partners, and community residents. Historically, this has mostly happened on an informal, ad-hoc nature. For example, currently there is a group of representatives from the departments outlined in the bill that meets, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis to move initiatives forward to support the North Wheaton area. We have worked together to remove illegal cones from the street, analyze opportunities to improve cleanliness, specifically through waste disposal challenges, and surveyed over 500 households on vehicular and

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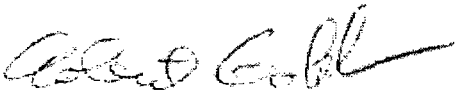
pedestrian safety issues. This bill will provide structure to this process, enabling us to better establish best practices and resources to bring to other communities throughout the County.

In addition to the Action Team proposed in this legislation, we would like you to consider, in those neighborhoods where a full action plan is not called for by the Service Center Director, in developing a mechanism where residents can raise an issue for consideration of cross-departmental coordination. Nothing is more frustrating for a resident than having their issue transferred around from department to department. One option might be cross-departmental groups, set up by District that meet on a regular basis where issues and complaints could be referred.

One caveat I will note, much of our previous successes in spurring investment and removing blight can be attributed to the County's ability to leverage Community Development Block Grant Funds, and other program funds to support the infrastructure changes necessary to remove the blighting factors. This is in addition to the private funding nonprofit partners are able to bring to the table. Without supportive funding any Neighborhood Action Team will be limited in the change efforts they are able to implement. It is still critical to organize, and plan, but we must be cognitive of the limitations of the Neighborhood Action Team's role as we move forward in this process.

Thank you for always looking out for all residents in Montgomery County. We look forward to continuing to work with the County to enhance the quality of life for all Montgomery County residents. Please feel free to reach out to me with any follow-up at rgoldman@mhpartners.org or 301-812-4114.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Goldman, Esq.
President

Testimony of Andrew Platt in Support of Bill 25-16
“Neighborhood Action Teams”

My name is Andrew Platt, I am here today to speak in support of Bill 25-16, the “Neighborhood Action Team.” I have lived in Wheaton for the last 16 years and experienced the visual blight and quality of life issues this bill seeks to address first hand.

The current 311 system is inadequate to address the problems that exist in my neighborhood as a single property can have violations that span across multiple agencies. This requires that a separate 311 report be filed for each violation and there is little coordination between agencies.

For example, at 3006 Kingswell there is a homeowner led construction project that has been going on for 4 years now, resulting in hazardous unfinished work, sediment flows into the street, trash across the property, and vehicles blocking the sidewalk. Under the current system I have to file complaints about each of these issues separately with Permits, DEP, DHCA, and the Police. While each agency may come out, on their own timeline, to address their problem, the lack of a holistic solution enables the property owner to continue to be an eyesore in the neighborhood. Or you can look at 12022 Judson Road, which has been running an unlicensed auto repair company for the past 13 years. When a complaint is called into DHCA, vehicles are moved onto the street with fake plates, when the police are called about the junked cars in the street, they are moved back onto the property. Without the coordination of multiple agencies through a Neighborhood Action Team, resolution to these quality of life issues is handled in a “siloed” manner on the timeline of the specific agency involved—which can be over 90 days in some cases.

In addition to the coordination of targeted enforcement efforts, having the Neighborhood Action Team working in coordination with local neighborhood associations would be of great assistance in both outreach and in enforcement “sweeps” of specific neighborhoods. I know that the Connecticut Avenue Estates Neighborhood Association and the Glenmont Forest Neighbors Civic Association have conducted walk-throughs of their neighborhoods with members of this Council. As you have seen, there are properties that have violations that stretch across multiple agencies. If the same sort of walk-through could be conducted with the Neighborhood Action Team, enforcement could be coordinated on the spot and the blight problem mitigated.

To recap, Bill 25-16 and the Neighborhood Action Team present a wonderful opportunity for the Council to address a real and substantial quality of life issue impacting my neighborhood.

July 12, 2016

Good Afternoon Council President Floreen and Members of the County Council:

Over the last four years, I have worked closely with countless residents in Wheaton North including, the residents of Connecticut Avenue Estates, on quality of life issues that affect our community. I wholeheartedly agree with Councilmember George Leventhal's views on the circumstances impacting my neighborhood. We understand how issues of blight can have serious and detrimental effects on a community's quality of life, property values, and morale. Bill 25-16, the Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team, would enable a team tasked with evaluating deteriorating areas in communities to quickly establish workable, timely action plans to address issues of blight. In CAENA's own organizational efforts, it has been very difficult navigating multiple agencies and their respective processes. The result is a very frustrating, time-consuming experience when trying to address pertinent issues in a fragmented manner. I believe this legislation will go a long way in coordinating County resources to better assist County residents experiencing similar issues.

Bill 25-16 is an equitable way to spread resources to every neighborhood in Montgomery County. Furthermore, this bill will formalize existing coordinated interagency efforts occurring informally to address quality of life issues. Passage and implementation of this bill would also instill hope and aspiration for future residents who will seek out *all areas* of the County to raise a family. The enactment of this bill will symbolize the County's embrace and adaptation to cultural shifts and it's reception to and support of the type of growth and maintenance we see in specific areas of the County and want *throughout the entire* County.

Not only can this bill be regarded as a mechanism for change, but the implications of its enactment are profound and necessary. The profundity of this bill lies in its potential to serve as a model for other regional Counties, and potentially nationally. The type of action-oriented, solution-driven principles embedded in this legislation is needed in our communities now. People deserve a responsive government and one that leads effectively, especially given the current social climate. People across the nation are in need of leadership, solutions, and measurable change. As a County perfectly positioned in the backyard of our nation's capital, this is a unique opportunity for the County Council assume a leadership role and send a clear message to every resident in the County that our local government will assure their living conditions are important and a priority. Residents need to know they are cared for and policies are in place to offer them the best possible advantages. Just as the color of our skin should not determine access to opportunities or success, nor should a zip code determine the success of a neighborhood. We need policies to foster healthy and sustainable living conditions. This nation is experiencing turmoil from difficult issues that have long been unaddressed; you have the

distinctive opportunity to address specific issues before they become too difficult and remind every resident conscious of our current times that we live in a great County willing and capable of fostering a more perfect community. Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you all have a great day and productive week.

Nichelle Dowell, President
Connecticut Avenue Estates Neighborhood Association (CAENA)
11913 Dalewood Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20902
443-415-2639

Connecticut Avenue Estates NEIGHBORHOOD Association (CAENA)
We are Action-Oriented-Solution-Driven

Need Help Handling Community-Related matters?
Contact us: caena20902@gmail.com



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From: "kimblynpersaud@aol.com" <kimblynpersaud@aol.com>

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Subject: Bill 25-16

Councilmember Leventhal,

I have been before the County Council many times to testify against legislation that has destroyed our quality of life and decimated our sense of pride. I have witness my neighbors being called racist, because they were concerned about blight and the impact it would have on their property values. I've sat in meetings with County Representatives from the various departments, as they came up with every excuse as to why it took them seven years to finally site a house for being an illegal rooming house. I've sat in meetings at Mid-County and listened as DCHS, DPS and DEP justified why they continued to look the other way, as they allow our communities to become slums. I've walked up and down Connecticut Avenue Estates with County Council members to identify problem areas, only to find out that the Council had chosen to give money to MHP and Impact Silver Spring to address issues of blight in the neighborhood.

Now, you and Councilmember Navarro have had an epiphany, issues of blight can have serious and deleterious effects on a community's quality of life, property value and morale. The community has been saying this and documenting the effects for years. If you are truly interested in combating the destructive effects of blight in our communities, I would suggest:

- Starting with the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Protection, they must start enforcing the laws that are on the books.

- In our neighborhood, we have several illegal rooming houses, that have been identified as rooming house, but they are not registered. All rooming houses and accessory apts. must be registered!

- We have legal rooming houses that have not been inspected in years, if ever. While in Takoma Park,

(18)

Rooming homes and accessory apts. are inspected annually - we must have the same service.

- We need the County Council to revisit the commercial vehicle's law - even these small commercial vehicles are wrecking havoc on the streets we live on.

- We need the County Council to address Accessory Apts. and overcrowded living conditions, which leads to an enormous amount of trash, which leads to a ripe feeding ground for rodents, unsafe living conditions and parking issues.

- Affordable housing!!!!

Everything I've listed has been said a million times, it doesn't take rocket scientist to figure out there's a direct correlation between the lack of code enforcement and public squalor. Simply stated, the legislation as it is, is nothing more than another level bureaucracy, which will accomplish nothing if the aforementioned list is not implemented.

Sincerely,

Kimblyn Persaud
President, Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association

Close

Email Viewer

Message Details Attachments Headers Source

[HTML](#)

From: "Me" <gwpatton1@yahoo.com>

Date: 7/11/2016 8:51:37 PM

To: "county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov" <county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov>

Cc:

Subject: New neighborhood bill - same song, old story

To combat the issue of blight we need the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Protection to enforce the laws that are on the books.

- In our neighborhood, we have several illegal rooming houses, that have been identified as rooming house, but they are not registered. All rooming houses and accessory apts. must be registered.
- We have legal rooming houses that have not been inspected in years, if ever. While in Takoma Park, Rooming homes and accessory apts. are inspected annually - we must have the same service.
- We need the County Council to revisit the commercial vehicle's law - even these small commercial vehicles are wrecking havoc on our quality of life. If you could take pictures of all the cars parked on the street, that would be helpful.
- We need the County Council to address Accessory Apts. and overcrowded living conditions, which create a burden on County services, and creates huge amounts of trash, which creates rodents. Not to mention, unsafe living conditions and parking issues.
- Property Taxes have already increased, how are they planning on paying for these services?

A similar model to bill 25-16 was used to help fight blight in the Connecticut Ave. Estates area.....it failed and now, Councilmember Navarro and Leventhal have come up with this legislation. Unless the County Council address these issues first, bill 25-16 is just another level of bureaucracy with unyielding results that we will have to pay for.

GW Patton
20902

Close

20

Email Viewer

Message Details Attachments Headers Source

[HTML](#)

From: "NINA KOLTNOW" <ninack@me.com>
Date: 7/12/2016 10:15:13 AM
To: "county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov" <county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov>
Cc:
Subject: Bill 25-16

Dear Council Members,

As a longtime resident of Wheaton, I am writing in opposition to Bill 25-16. While we would like much of Wheaton to be cleaned up, another committee is not the solution. Suitable laws are not in the books, and have only to be enforced. If Wheaton were given resources equivalent to other areas of the county in terms of enforcement, we would not have much of the blight we have today.

For example,

- In our neighborhood, we have several illegal rooming houses, that have been identified as rooming house, but they are not registered. All rooming houses and accessory apts. must be registered.
- We have legal rooming houses that have not been inspected in years, if ever. While in Takoma Park, Rooming homes and accessory apts. are inspected annually - we must have the same service.
- We need the County Council to revisit the commercial vehicle's law - even these small commercial vehicles are wrecking havoc on our quality of life.
- We need the County Council to address Accessory Apts. and overcrowded living conditions, which create a burden on County services, and creates huge amounts of trash, which creates rodents, not to mention unsafe living conditions and parking issues.

A similar model to bill 25-16 was used to help fight blight in the Connecticut Ave. Estates area.....it failed. Unless the County Council address these issues first, bill 25-16 is just another level of bureaucracy with unyielding results that we will have to pay for.

Thank you for your time,
Nina Koltnow
2314 Parker AV
Wheaton

Sent from my iPad

Close

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Hillandale Citizens Association
Comments on Montgomery County Bill 25-16
“Neighborhood Action Team”

The Executive Committee of the Hillandale Citizens Association (HCA) supports Bill 25-16 to establish a countywide Neighborhood Action Team (NAT), which, at the request of a Regional Services Center, would bring focus to, and develop an action plan for, any specific community experiencing blight and declining “quality of life” in Montgomery County. However, we also ask that Council take this opportunity to help all neighborhoods by augmenting this legislation.

As an active association, we recognize that maintaining our community is essential. To that end, our residents look to County agencies, primarily, but not exclusively, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) and the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), for code enforcement to avoid potential blight and neighborhood decline. Unfortunately, sometimes enforcement falls short of full compliance, often takes too long and, at times, is ineffective. Occasionally problems are referred to other agencies without resolution, or between departments within agencies and never addressed. For residents experiencing these failures, the lack of a visible, positive outcome is frustrating and erodes confidence in the County’s ability to solve problems.

Although not part of the current NAT legislation, we ask Council augment this Bill with a new proactive “tool” for communities not experiencing large-scale blight to have improved code enforcement outcomes. This additional resource could either be through a request to the NAT, or with establishment of agency ombudsmen/trouble shooters directly available to residents. The goal is to have improved visibility and resolution to difficult cases not being addressed by normal code enforcement actions. This new process could also be a quality source of feedback on how specific agencies are doing and provide insight to any needed improvements in service request management.

We ask for your support of our idea to improve the Neighborhood Action Team legislation. Having a clear and resident-friendly method of resolving difficult neighborhood “quality of life” situations will help Montgomery County communities avoid decline and possible blighted properties.

Submitted by HCA
July 22, 2016



ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

July 29, 2016

TO: Nancy Floreen, President, County Council

FROM: Jennifer A. Hughes, Director, Office of Management and Budget
[Signature]
Robert Hagedoorn, Acting Director, Department of Finance

SUBJECT: FEIS for Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards –
Neighborhood

Please find attached the fiscal and economic impact statements for the above-referenced legislation.

JAH:fz

cc: Bonnie Kirkland, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Lisa Austin, Offices of the County Executive
Joy Nurmi, Special Assistant to the County Executive
Patrick Lacefield, Director, Public Information Office
Robert Hagedoorn, Acting Director, Department of Finance
Diane Jones, Director, Department of Permitting Services
David Platt, Department of Finance
Dennis Hetman, Office of Management and Budget
Jennifer Nordin, Office of Management and Budget
Alex Espinosa, Office of Management and Budget
Amy Wilson, Office of Management and Budget
Nacem Mia, Office of Management and Budget

Fiscal Impact Statement
Council Bill 25-16 Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team

1. Legislative Summary:

Bill 25-16 would require the Executive to create a Neighborhood Action Team to address visual blight and other quality of life issues in the County. The Bill also specifies the duties and membership criteria of the Neighborhood Action Team.

2. An estimate of changes in County revenues and expenditures regardless of whether the revenues or expenditures are assumed in the recommended or approved budget. Includes source of information, assumptions, and methodologies used.

The only additional estimated expenditure is the need for professional staff to respond to coordinated enforcement action occasionally on weekends when specific issues related to non-weekday home occupation/business activities occur. The Department of Permitting Services (DPS) estimates that as much as 500 hours of overtime pay or comparable contractor expenses may be necessary to cover these activities annually. Inspections of this nature will be performed by a Permitting & Code Enforcement Inspector III. The total cost for this overtime expenditure is estimated at the maximum of a grade 23 salary, with an estimated modest increase of 2% yearly:

\$67.00 (Grade 23 at time/half) x 500 hours = \$33,500

FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
\$ 33,500	\$ 34,170	\$ 34,853	\$ 35,550	\$ 36,261
total 6 year costs:			\$174,335	

The Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Police Department do not anticipate similar over-time expenditures.

Each of the affected departments believes any additional expenditures can be absorbed and managed through their current staffing compliment and funding levels.

3. Revenue and expenditure estimates covering at least the next 6 fiscal years.

The total cost for DPS overtime expenditure is estimated at the maximum of a grade 23 salary, with an estimated modest increase of 2% yearly is as follows:

FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
\$ 33,500	\$ 34,170	\$ 34,853	\$ 35,550	\$ 36,261
total 6 year costs:			\$174,335	

4. An actuarial analysis through the entire amortization period for each bill that would affect retiree pension or group insurance costs.

There is no impact to retiree pension or group insurance costs.

5. Later actions that may affect future revenue and expenditures if the bill authorizes future spending.

Bill No. 25-16 does not authorize future spending. Depending on the success of coordinated actions related to this regulation, additional staff may be needed to accommodate an increase in coordinated enforcement action throughout all five Regional Service Center areas.

6. An estimate of the staff time needed to implement the Bill.

Initially, staff time will involve the research and planning related to the Neighborhood Action Committee itself. Later, coordinated enforcement action may involve several staff members from the affected departments implementing the committee's recommendations for each of the Regional Service Center areas.

7. An explanation of how the addition of new staff responsibilities would affect other duties.

The overall impact to new staff responsibilities may depend on the hours required to carry out the Committee's recommendations for each of the Regional Service Center area which is difficult to estimate at this time.

8. An estimate of costs when an additional appropriation is needed.

Additional staff responsibilities may involve the need for working outside core hours and weekends. The total cost for this overtime expenditure in the DPS is estimated at the maximum of a grade 23 salary, with an estimated modest increase of 2% yearly:

FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
\$ 33,500	\$ 34,170	\$ 34,853	\$ 35,550	\$ 36,261
total 6 year costs:			\$174,335	

The Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Police Department do not anticipate similar over-time expenditures.

Each of the affected departments believes any additional expenditures can be absorbed and managed through their current staffing compliment and funding levels.

9. A description of any variable that could affect revenue and cost estimates.

Total incidents handled by the team will have a direct impact on costs. This variable is difficult to project at this time given a lack of historical metrics tracking incidents requiring responses.

10. Ranges of revenue or expenditures that are uncertain or difficult to project.

Until each of the Regional Service Center areas are evaluated, it is impossible to predict total expenditures related to implementing the Committee's recommendations related to coordinated enforcement action.

11. If a Bill is likely to have no fiscal impact, why that is the case.

Additional staff responsibilities may involve the need for working outside core hours and weekends.

12. Other fiscal impacts or comments.

Not applicable.

13. The following contributed to and concurred with this analysis: (Enter name and department).

Hadi Mansouri, DPS

Barbara Suter, DPS

Brady Goldsmith, OMB

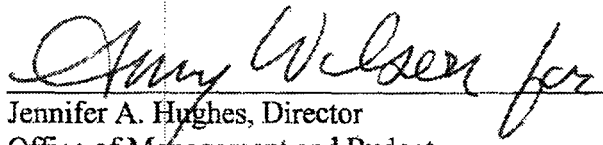
Tim Goetzinger, DHCA

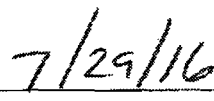
Patty Bubar, DEP

Robin Ennis, DEP

Neil Shorb, Police

Dennis Hetman, DPS


Jennifer A. Hughes, Director
Office of Management and Budget


Date

Economic Impact Statement
Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action

Background:

This legislation would require the County Executive to create a Neighborhood Action Team (Team). The legislation would also specify the duties and membership of the Team. Bill 25-16 lists the membership of the Team as follows:

- The Department of Transportation;
- The Department of Housing and Community Affairs;
- The Department of Permitting Services;
- The Department of Environmental Protection;
- The Police Department; and
- Any representative the Regional Services Center Director or the County Executive finds necessary.

Bill 25-16 requires the Team to “create a plan with recommended actions to address blight and quality of life issues in any affected community.”

1. The sources of information, assumptions, and methodologies used.

Source of information: *Assessing blight and its economic impacts: a case study of Dallas, TX*. P. Maghelal, S. Andrew, S. Arlikatti, and H.S. Jang, Department of Public Administration, University of North Texas, 2014. The Department of Finance did not develop methodologies in the preparation of this economic impact statement.

According to the study by Maghelal et al., the authors contend that blighted neighborhoods “differ only in degrees to non-blighted areas.” Studies of urban blight have analyzed the presence of vacant lots as “attracting crime, dumping, abandoned or dilapidated housing, and commercial and rental properties owned by non-complying absentee landlords.” More recent studies have moved from the structural aspects of condemned housing to a more systematic analysis of neighborhood quality and the socio-economic characteristics of neighborhood residents.

The objective of the legislation is the creation of the Team to address “visual blight and other quality of life issues.” Therefore, Finance assumes that the objective of Bill 25-16 is not only to analyze the economic impact of vacant lots but to undertake a systematic analysis of neighborhood quality and the socio-economic characteristics of neighborhood residents, that is, the quality of life issues.

2. A description of any variable that could affect the economic impact estimates.

There are no assumed variables that could affect the economic impact estimates. Bill 25-16 establishes the Team that will create a plan to address blight and the quality of life in affected communities. It is the definitive plan created by the Team that will identify those variables that

Economic Impact Statement
Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action

could have an economic impact on the County's economy and specifically the economy of the blighted area.

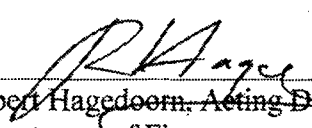
3. The Bill's positive or negative effect, if any on employment, spending, savings, investment, incomes, and property values in the County.

Bill 25-16 would have no direct positive or negative effect on the County's economy. However, the action plan created by the Team and its implementation could have a positive economic effect.

4. If a Bill is likely to have no economic impact, why is that the case?

Bill 25-16 would have no direct impact on the County's economy. Please see paragraph 3.

5. The following contributed to or concurred with this analysis: David Platt, Department of Finance.



Robert Hagedoorn, Acting Director
Department of Finance

7/27/16
Date



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

MEMORANDUM

September 22, 2016

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

TO: Nancy Floreen, President
County Council

FROM: Isiah Leggett 
County Executive

RE: Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team

On July 28, 2016, the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee held a worksession on Bill 25-16 and made a recommendation to forward the Bill to the full Council for final action. The vote was two votes in favor with one abstention. Several members of my staff attended that worksession to provide comments on the Bill. I am writing today to provide you with an update on several steps I am taking that relate to the intent behind the Bill.

First, I wish to commend Councilmembers Leventhal and Navarro for sponsoring Bill 25-16. It seeks to address quality of life issues in our County, issues that can be very complex, on an interdepartmental basis. I also wish to commend Councilmember Navarro for sharing her concerns about blight in and around the Connecticut Avenue Estates community in Wheaton. As you may recall, and as acknowledged by Councilmember Navarro during your discussion of the Bill, in 2014 I pulled together an interdisciplinary team of department directors and other Executive staff, along with key nonprofit partners, to develop a holistic plan to address the many issues present in the community. While there continues to be room for improvement, that informal, but very serious and concerted effort has been successful in making many positive changes.

The frontline County presence on most community issues are our very dedicated Regional Service Center Directors (Regional Director) who are fully engaged with the communities on a daily basis. Individually and collectively, they possess a thorough understanding of the County Government organization, programs, services, priorities, and the physical, diverse socio-economic demographic characteristics of the regions, tools essential to helping address complex local problems and in the development of public policy affecting communities. A core function of the Regional Director is to anticipate and/or identify community problems, especially those that will require multiple agencies' involvement in order to resolve the problem.

Nancy Floreen, President
September 22, 2016
Page 2

When Regional Directors identify an issue, they assess, coordinate and recommend interdepartmental/cross-agency activities and facilitate the delivery of public services. Their role is to bring the departments/agencies (including state and at times federal agencies) together and jointly devise a strategy for addressing the challenges facing the particular local community in their region. In addition to the work previously mentioned in Wheaton, some examples of issues dealt with by Cathy Matthews, our Upcounty Director, include the Middlebrook Mobile Homes Park in Germantown and Mel's Ice Rink in Poolesville. Each of these issues involved multiple departments, outside agencies and sensitive discussions and negotiations to reach a resolution.

With the mission and work of our Regional Service Centers as a foundation, I am establishing a Neighborhood Action Team (Team). The Team will include the Regional Directors, the Directors of the Departments of Housing and Community Affairs, Permitting Services, Environmental Protection, Health and Human Services, Recreation and Transportation, the Police Department, the Office of Community Partnerships and, significantly, the CountyStat Office. Other representatives will be included on an as-needed basis. When appropriate, the Team may take advantage of community groups that can supplement the County's response, through their first-hand experience working with the community.

The Team can be activated in one of several ways. First, because they are closest to the communities and the residents in their respective areas, the Regional Directors often will be in the best position to identify (in many cases, along with information from Councilmembers and their staff) when certain community issues reach a critical mass that require a multi-disciplinary approach. While not an exact science and generally a more subjective approach, we are working on developing the criteria that can be used as a guide for these determinations. We also will employ a more objective "trigger" mechanism that would activate the Team by using a systematic observation of 311 and other data that CountyStat collects to identify recurring issues in a particular community. The Team will not be activated to address every single issue or individual complaint that is reported but will be reserved for those issues that require cross-departmental action.

Stakeholder agencies will be identified and informed of the problem. The Team will then assess and prioritize sub-issues and other factors related to the problem, the resources available and other support that may be needed. A strategy or action plan will be developed with an ongoing eye for opportunities to maximize resources and for possible challenges to the desired outcome(s). The plan will typically include targeted outreach, informational meeting(s) with the affected community members, the general strategies to address the problem(s), and mechanisms to solicit the residents' observations and ideas and keep them informed. The Regional Director, in particular, will also engage in sensitive discussions and negotiations with principal stakeholders to secure their "buy-in," cooperation, and additional resources when necessary.

Nancy Floreen, President
September 22, 2016
Page 3

Throughout the process, there will also be an ongoing effort to identify potential opportunities to expand the community benefit or to develop or re-evaluate policy.

The work of the Team will be tracked and reported in several ways. First, we will utilize CountyStat to track progress on the established goals for addressing each issue. The status of the Team's work will be reported monthly, directly to the Chief Administrative Officer. Reporting to Council can be made on a quarterly basis as part of the Council's meetings with the Regional Directors.

To reiterate what Councilmembers have already heard, we already have much of these coordinated efforts in place through our Regional Directors. I believe my approach described above accomplishes the very worthy goals of Bill 25-16 in a more appropriate, flexible and holistic way.

IL/jn



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

TO: Isiah Leggett
County Executive

FROM: Nancy Navarro, Councilmember *MM*
George Leventhal, Councilmember *George*

DATE: October 7, 2016

SUBJECT: Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team

We are in receipt of your memorandum dated September 22, 2016 regarding Bill 25-16, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards – Neighborhood Action Team. Thank you for your attention to the important quality of life issues this legislation seeks to address. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the legislation and the proactive steps you are now taking to help address these issues.

In a memorandum to you dated June 30, 2014, Councilmember Navarro wrote:

I propose creating an interdepartmental unit comprised of officials from across County Government to focus on quality of life issues in neighborhoods. This unit would have at least one staff member from the Code Enforcement Section of DHCA, DPS, DEP, MCPD, and DOT. They would work as a team to increase proactive enforcement of housing code, parking, permitting, illegal dumping, and other quality-of-life violations in areas identified by the County Executive as having the greatest need. This unit would help mitigate the “stove piping” or “silo” mentality that frustrates residents about government. The unit will be nimble enough to work in one or more high need areas at a time and will complement—not replace—existing enforcement activities. I encourage the County Executive to recommend adequate funding in the FY16 Operating Budget, or sooner through a supplemental appropriation, to implement this proposal.

Since that time, the Executive Branch has informally set up interdepartmental working groups for targeted areas to address parking, public safety, code enforcement, and other issues. However, this process was never formalized, as envisioned in Councilmember Navarro’s memo, nor were funds appropriated for this specific purpose. We introduced

Bill 25-16 for two primary reasons: 1) Formalize the Neighborhood Action Team model so it can be replicated and implemented as needed throughout the County and 2) Establish a reporting mechanism so the Council is kept abreast of Neighborhood Action Team activities and accomplishments.

Executive Branch staff raised concerns with Council Staff and Councilmembers about potential unintended consequences of passing Bill 25-16. Executive Branch staff was concerned that by creating the Neighborhood Action Team through legislation, it would be subject to the Open Meetings Act. Council Staff agreed with this assessment. While we strongly support transparency and openness whenever possible, Executive Staff raised legitimate privacy concerns because of the sensitive nature of information that the Neighborhood Action Team may discuss. For example, a resident may be in violation of the housing code due to financial challenges or a serious health condition. While we agree that County Departments should work with residents to comply with the code, it would be inappropriate for the County to disclose these sorts of personal details about a resident under these circumstances.

We understand that your memorandum creating a Neighborhood Action Team seeks to balance these privacy concerns, while maintaining the original intent of the legislation. We are pleased that your description of the Neighborhood Action Team's responsibilities are identical to what we proposed in Bill 25-16. However, we continue to believe legislation is appropriate to strengthen the reporting requirement for these activities. Monthly reports to the Chief Administrative Officer are important, but not adequate in and of themselves, for maintaining the level of transparency we seek in Bill 25-16. We have asked our legislative attorney to draft an amendment to Bill 25-16 that would institute a reporting requirement that will provide the Council and the public with regular updates on the Neighborhood Action Team's activities.

Thank you again for your attention to this issue. We look forward to moving ahead with legislation that will strengthen the Neighborhood Action Team, public transparency and quality of life for our residents.