



On January 5 and 12, 2023, capital budget agencies presented their FY24-29 Capital Improvement Program requests to the Planning Commission. Below are questions that were raised by attendees at these meetings, and responses from the agencies.

Department of Finance

Q: Are healthcare costs going up 10-12 percent in a single year? That is surprising

A: Employee benefits overall are projected to increase by 11%. This increase includes healthcare costs, pensions, and other employee benefits. The combined increase of all these items is 11%.

Q: As a destination city, what is the total amount of hotel revenue and the percentage of hotel tax related to their revenue?

A: The rate is 9.5 percent. The preliminary Fiscal 2022 year-end estimate indicates that the City received \$24.3 million. Hotel and short-term rentals reported about \$256.3 million in proceeds subject to Hotel tax.

Q: What are the pillars used for making decisions?

A: The five pillars are: building public safety, clean and healthy communities, equitable neighborhood development, prioritizing our youth, and responsible stewardship of City resources. Learn more at <https://bbmr.baltimorecity.gov/>.

Q: Where is a list of all the tax credit programs is posted on the Department of Finance's web site

A: A list of tax credits is available at <https://finance.baltimorecity.gov/public-info/credits>.

Q: Where can I find a report on possible tax credit reforms?

A: The City engaged Ernst & Young to study its tax credits and make recommendations about possible changes. The report is available at <https://bbmr.baltimorecity.gov/management-research>.

Department of General Services

Q: Are any of the buildings on the 50% and above scale housing the state employees that are being transferred to downtown Baltimore?

A: No. This is just City buildings - City Hall, Abel Wolman, Benton Building, fire stations, police stations, health centers, etc.

- Q: Is the "Future of Work" an official plan, or just a term for a set of policies, etc?
A: The Future of Work is currently in the pilot stage. Piloting with select agencies to identify which staff need to be in office full time, which staff can be fully remote, and which staff need to be hybrid. The pilot is examining hoteling office models, technology needs, etc.
- Q: How do we find the status of other projects [where a private organization such as a nonprofit rents the building from the City], for instance Lois T. Murray school?
A: Interested parties can contact DGS directly. Contact information is available here: <https://generalservices.baltimorecity.gov/contact-us-2>.
- Q: For these community involved buildings, is it a requirement to include community input in making these decisions?
A: While it is not a requirement, the City does aim to include community in these conversations.

Department of Recreation and Parks

- Q: When will the comprehensive parks plan be complete?
A: This is expected to be a 14 month process with completion in March 2024.
- Q: The state legislature earmarked \$200k for Latrobe park in 2022, however the state says that the city of Baltimore has not signed the correct form to receive the money, what is the status of these funds?
A: These funds were earmarked in the 2022 General Assembly session and budgeted in the FY 2023 capital budget, which began on July 1, 2022. The City is working with the State Department of General Services on a grant agreement.
- Q: What happened to the money allocated for the Easterwood skatepark?
A: In FY2020, \$300,000 was dedicated to Skatepark Improvements (474-133). In FY2022, \$850,000 was budgeted for Easterwood Park Improvements in the same project account (474-133). The funding for construction of the improvements is still available, pending a final design of the park improvements. All allocated funding is to remain in Easterwood Park.
- Q: What is the schedule for construction of the Chick Webb Recreation Center?
A: Construction is expected to start in Spring 2023 and take 540 days.
- Q: How are improvements to Madison Square Rec Center, the DOME and the Nathan Irby Park, being coordinated? The rec center is closed. Is there a schedule for comprehensive development?
A: The Comprehensive Plan will further explore the scope and timing of these improvements. There is a FY24 request to improve the Dome. The FY27 request for Nathan Irby Park would construct site improvements based on the recent master plan. BCRP has current funding to advance the design and engineering.

- Q: When does BCRP include shade structures for new playgrounds?
A: Shade structures are typically considered for regional parks and destination playgrounds.
- Q: Where is the Robert C Marshall field in the plans?
A: The Department is currently finalizing plans and in Stormwater Management review. They expect to advertise for construction in Spring 2023.
- Q: What is the Departments strategy to elevate the history of the Chick Webb Rec Center. This African American accomplishment is minimized, but can elevated to national attention.
A: The “Founders Room” and interpretive signage are part of the upcoming renovation/expansion. BCRP’s Marketing and Communications team will work to tell the story.
- Q: Considering the expansion and improvement of the historic Chick Webb Memorial Recreation Center, off street parking was raised as an issue. The parking lot of NAF is in disrepair. Is there collaboration with the Department of Education to upgrade the parking lot for use for the rec center and the school? This is a high redevelopment area.
A: BCRP and City Schools have fleshed out a plan to both improve the parking lot, as well as the "promenade"/pedestrian path along Eden Street between Chick Webb and the parking lot. We have integrated those physical improvements into the primary construction contract, which is being ratified this month at the BOE. Additionally a permanent easement agreement to clarify use and roles of maintenance on the portion of the parking lot dedicated to users of Chick Webb is also being presented to the BOE either this month or next.

Department of Public Works

- Q: How do we accelerate the residential goal to make it 80% by 2030?
A: In the short term: increase residential access to food scrap drop-off points, increase education and support of home & community composting, pursue source reduction tactics, support food rescue efforts across the City, develop methods and metrics for tracking food-waste across sectors (including residential), support organics recycling and compost use market-development in the City. In the long term: determine the feasibility of curbside organics pick-up, support the development of local composting processing facilities.
- Q: If we meet all the DWP composting, landfill, and recycling goals, will we be able to close the incinerator by 2028?
A: The incinerator is run by a private entity. As such, DPW does not have authority to make said decisions. Alternatively, DPW aims to prioritize sustainable materials management while developing avenues for waste diversion and processing that minimize negative environmental externalities. With adequate funding, support and collaboration, DPW is committed to moving away from incineration to process Baltimore City’s Municipal waste.

Q: Is there an estimate of the tonnage that could be handled by the compost facilities at this level of funding?

A: Funds requested include allocations for site design, permitting, facilities development, and operating costs, but do not reflect the total investment needed to develop a facility that would meet the region's organics recycling needs. In theory, processing capacity would come online incrementally. Single unit CASP systems typically have a processing capacity of ~800 tons per year with cost per unit estimated at \$250k.

Q: What is the % of material actually being recycled that is being picked up by the recycling trucks?

A: The City tracks recycling tonnages and conducts four recycling sorts per year to assess contamination rates and commodity share percentages of recyclable components. The current recycling contamination rate is ~15%. The City employs contractors to process all municipal recycling. Once the recyclables change hands to the contractors, the City is not able to collect detailed information on how materials are handled. Our recycling contractors report that materials are sorted, baled, and sold. We assume that the 15% contamination is sorted out and processed through traditional solid waste streams.

Department of Housing & Community Development

Q: Where does DHCD stand on Councilman Ryan Dorsey's Abundant Housing Act Bill# 22-0285 which will allow contractors to renovate homes and turning them into multifamily units without community input. This however, would put many people in danger who purchase these homes because they have not been properly vetted.

Additionally, what action plans are being put in place to reduce the number of reported renovation activity without proper or in most cases no permits. Homes are being fully renovated without permits and these homes are being reported via 3-1-1 many districts.

A: We have not taken a position on Councilman Dorsey's, but are generally supportive of legislative changes that remove barriers to rehab properties. Nevertheless, all home renovations, whether single or multifamily units, must meet established code standards.

Q: What action plans are being put in place to reduce the number of reported renovation activity without proper or in most cases no permits. Homes are being fully renovated without permits and these homes are being reported via 3-1-1 many districts.

A: Our Code Enforcement Inspectors respond to all 3-1-1 complaints. Our Inspectors also routinely scan their assigned districts for unpermitted activity when they are out on their daily routes.

Q: On Slide 45, do you know what percent it is if we remove demolition from that list?

A: If demolition funding is removed from DHCD calculations on Slide 45, the percentage of funding that is invested in formerly redlined neighborhoods remains at 82%.

Q: One slide talked about the maintenance costs for the 1200 properties we already own is \$58million. What exactly does that entail? Is it just stabilization or actually rehab that would be paid for by anyone rehabbing them with some help from us?

A: Just stabilization of the property. This stabilization can include roof repair, interior framing, and other key repairs to the infrastructure of the property that preserve it for future development and reduce a future developers rehab costs.

Baltimore Development Corporation

Q: We are a small business that provides engineering services. Will the design projects listed be open sourced? ie, be open to competition or will they be done by engineering firms on existing contracts?

A: BDC does not contract directly for most of its projects - funds are granted to a private entity or projects are advertised through another City agency.

Q: For the commercial loan fund- are there priorities that balance the need of investment and community needs, such as attracting or retaining grocery stores to prevent food deserts?

A: BDC loan funds are used to support the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses to promote investment and job creation in an inclusive manner. BDC's goals are aligned with the city's comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) which includes supporting healthy food access.

Q: Regarding the \$2.5 million for the Warner St. streetscape, will some of that be used to support the Baltimore Greenway Trail segment in that area?

A: The Warner Street streetscape project limits are within the City Right of Way of Warner Street from Ostend Street to the Horseshoe Casino.

Q: How can we bring an Aldi in place of the Price Rite?

A: BDC is working with the owner of the Mt. Clare Junction Shopping Center to market the vacant space to new potential grocery stores.

Department of Transportation

Q: How are DOT investments expected to improve usage of public transportation (equitably) across Baltimore City?

A: Baltimore City DOT evaluates a number of metrics in selection of capital project locations, equity being one. With adoption of the Complete Streets Manual, Baltimore City DOT has also established a Modal Hierarchy that prioritizes Public Transit (second to Walking). With the combination of these two ideologies, ongoing partnerships with Maryland Transit Authority (see 508-137 Improvements Along MTA Priority Bus Routes), improvements to the Charm City Circulator, and a number of other various initiatives, the future capital projects implemented across Baltimore City DOT's portfolio, from sidewalks to resurfacing to safety improvements to streetscapes and more, all expect to directly improve public transportation across the City.

- Q: When bridges over our water supply are not critical to access water infrastructure (like Phoenix Road) but just commuter routes for county residents, why is Baltimore City paying any money to replace these bridges?
- A: Baltimore City DPW is responsible for the stewardship of 24,850 acres of watershed, which includes the Loch Raven, Prettyboy, and Liberty reservoirs. The Phoenix Road Bridge is federally funded on an 80/20 split through the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration using allocations for Baltimore County. The remaining 20% is funded by the Baltimore City Department of Public Works. More project details are available at: <https://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/phoenix-road-bridge-replacement>
- Q: Why aren't we mandating ADA upgrades on full intersections during adjacent utility work like our peer cities? This is a huge missed opportunity to have improvements financed by utility providers who are profiting off of our infrastructure.
- A: To adequately respond to the specific question, BCDOT would request to please share the "peer cities" to ensure that the agency perform its due diligence in answering the question. In providing this "peer city" information, BCDOT would look to do a in-depth review on best practices into how the "peer cities" made policy changes without causing additional barriers to utility services. Currently, the Baltimore City Street Cuts Regulations apply to all utility providers so that every utility provider follows the same rules. The Street Cuts Regulations by the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) are pursuant to City Code Article 26, Subtitle 15 that specifies the requirements and limits for utility trenches in the right-of-way.
- Q: Recently DOT has partnered with the State agencies, the US Army Corps of Engineers and local nonprofits Sail Baltimore and Living Classrooms Foundation for maintenance dredging of the Baltimore Harbor. There is a Baltimore Fleet Week planned for June 2024 and a major national event America250 planned for Baltimore in June 2026. Would DOT add harbor dredging and marine infrastructure as a responsibility and priority?
- A: Baltimore City DOT recently completed Inner Harbor dredging efforts in the Spring/Summer of 2019. Capital funds of approximately \$700K were contributed from State agencies (Baltimore City DOT did not initiate these funds). An additional approximate \$300K of capital funds were received through Sail Baltimore intended for the disposal of the dredged material to Maryland Port Authority site. At this time, Baltimore City DOT does not intend on initiating funding for additional dredging.
- Q: What does the 2024 CIP request include for Bike master Plan implementation? I saw a \$6M figure and a \$1.6M figure later. Please clarify.
- A: \$500,000 per year is programmed for Bike Master Plan Implementation (\$3 million total for all six years of the plan).
- Q: How/why did DOT change the design of the Central Avenue improvements north of the bridge to include the bike lane and reduce travel lanes down to one? Will one lane handle the anticipated traffic from Harbor Point?

A: The Central Avenue - Phase II Project (from Baltimore Street to Lancaster Street, and the Harbor Point Connector Bridge) was originally advertised in 2015 through a design-build procurement method. Public input from the start of the project in 2015 supported additional review of the concept lane configurations, along with advanced evaluation into the safety/comfort of the proposed bicycle facilities on Central Avenue. During the design-build reviews, Baltimore City completed analysis in line with design guidelines from the Federal Highway Administration, the 2015 Bike Master Plan, and the Baltimore City Complete Streets Manual to assess the original concept.

Traffic analysis at each intersection within the project corridor was performed to evaluate the potential changes and lane reduction. The resulting proposed typical sections are 4/5 travel lanes during peak hours between Lancaster Street and Fleet Street, and 3 travel lanes between Fleet Street and Monument Street. The analysis concluded that the proposed typical sections are projected to accommodate the anticipated traffic volumes, with consideration to the full build-out of Harbor Point and other pipeline developments in Southeast Baltimore. A public presentation on this general topic is available at the below web address:

https://www.centralaveproject.com/images/previous_meetings/Central_Avenue_Striping_Changes_Public_Presentation_11_30_21.pdf