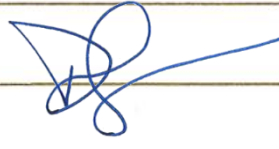



FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR 	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #22-0135R/ INFORMATIONAL HEARING – CODE ENFORCEMENT – NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY		

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

DATE: January 23, 2023

The Department of Planning is in receipt of City Council Bill #22-0135R, which is for the purpose of discussing vacant non-residential properties.

The Department of Planning does not have any direct data collection that would be responsive, as we are not responsible for code enforcement, managing vacant properties, or data on registration of properties, and on those specific topics we defer to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

However, we believe that the issue the advocates are trying to address is not vacant commercial buildings but unoccupied commercial buildings, particularly unoccupied commercial buildings that have remained unoccupied for multiple years. There is an important difference between vacant, unoccupied, and abandoned buildings, as explained in the report from DHCD. The problem with unoccupied buildings, which while clean and in compliance with code requirements, can be illustrated with an example on the northeast corner of North Charles Street and East North Avenue where the property owner has held the property for several decades without attempting to develop it.

This problem is evident in any area with a commercial market where an economic or community development agency/organization is working to build a market and revitalize the area. The unoccupied commercial property can choose to wait for the effort to be successful, without any penalty. So long as it is clean and in compliance with code enforcement, the cost to hold the unoccupied property is low enough that it will eventually be overcome when surrounding property values rise. Once that happens, the absent owner can maximize their return on the property. Receivership can address a vacant property, but not an unoccupied property. In short, there is no penalty for waiting.

The Department of Planning will support our community development partners and other City agencies in any way we can. We recommend including the Mayor’s Office of Community and Economic Development, the Law Department, BDC and HCD in the exploration for solutions.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

CR/ewt

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
Mr. Ethan Cohen, Mayor's Office
The Honorable Eric Costello, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Ms. Nikki Thompson, City Council President's Office
Mr. Colin Tarbert, BDC
Ms. Rebecca Witt, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Liam Davis, DOT
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services