

<b>FROM</b>	<b>NAME &amp; TITLE</b>	Robert Cename, Chief on behalf of 	<b>CITY of</b> <b>BALTIMORE</b> <b>MEMO</b>	
	<b>AGENCY NAME &amp; ADDRESS</b>	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4774		
	<b>SUBJECT</b>	City Council Bill 21-0037R – Informational Hearing – Studying Options to Rid Baltimore City of Vacant Properties		

DATE:

**TO**

The Honorable President and Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400

June 24, 2021

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0037R, Informational Hearing-Studying Options to Rid Baltimore City of Vacant Properties, the purpose of which is to invite representatives from various agencies to appear before the City Council to discuss the feasibility of specific recommendations in order to improve the ability of Baltimore City to remedy vacant dwellings.

Vacant homes and properties are an ongoing problem in Baltimore City, which have been linked to higher crime rates and general health concerns. Per Baltimore City Code, Art. 13, § 4-5, owners of vacant structures must file an annual registration statement with the Housing Commissioner. Currently, the City has a registration process for vacant properties and lots, but data suggests only a portion of vacant properties and lots are actually registered. Recent estimates show that there are over 15,000 vacant buildings in Baltimore.

The City utilizes several programs and tools across agencies to address vacant properties in Baltimore City and has been working on developing effective programs, including learning about best practices from other jurisdictions. For properties that are newly vacant, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Public Works (DPW) partner on these properties by placing the vacant building notices, which now includes posting owner information using a QR code, and boarding and cleaning of vacant buildings and lots. In addition, DHCD and the Office of the Comptroller have different programs to transition properties to more productive use. These programs include receivership, Vacants to Value, a vendor lien program, and the new in-rem foreclosure process, which is currently being developed.

When a property is considered to be vacant, DHCD will issue a Vacant Building Notice (VBN). A Failure to Abate (FTA) citation can be issued if nothing is done to address the VBN, which is a \$900 fine. In addition, if the property is not registered with the City, a Failure to File Annual Vacant Building Registration citation can also be issued, which is a \$500 fine. However, many of those fines remain unpaid and imposing additional fines would not guarantee additional revenue for the City, and may result in an increase in the value of liens on a property. In addition, a change to property tax rates, as discussed in this Resolution, cannot be implemented by the City without legislative actions made at the State level.

The Department of Finance will attend the hearing for this Resolution and will be available to provide further information as requested.

cc: Henry Raymond  
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Nina Themelis