

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

The Housing & Economic Development Committee is dedicated to fostering equitable growth and opportunity across Baltimore while addressing historic injustices, such as redlining and other discriminatory policies. Our goals include eliminating vacant properties, ensuring affordable housing, promoting sustainable development, and driving economic growth, job creation, and community revitalization through equitable policies and targeted strategies. By utilizing transparent governance, collaboration, and innovative solutions, we strive to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

The Honorable James Torrence

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

May 19, 2026

5:15PM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

LO25-0032

Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Council Oversight

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HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Honorable James Torrence
CHAIR

Legislative Oversight Hearing

LO25-0032

Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Council Oversight

Purpose: For the purpose of: calling relevant City Agencies and Representatives, as well as 3rd party stakeholders to review and discuss the City's policies around reinvesting in vacant housing in the City. Topics will include but not be limited to: interagency cooperation, implementation status, & public accountability.

REPORTING AGENCIES

- **Department of Housing and Community Development** •
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BACKGROUND

Vacancy in Baltimore

According to a 2023 study by the Abell Foundation, the City of Baltimore had nearly 15,000 vacant homes. Most of these homes are located in areas of high poverty; the report notes that 85 percent of vacancies are in distressed neighborhoods.¹ In response to this problem, the City has deployed several strategies and interventions partnering with stakeholders from the state government, local community groups, the private sector, faith communities, and others.

As of February 2026, the Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Dashboard lists 12,028 VBNs (Vacant Building Notices) in the City. A significant decrease since 2020, when the dashboard notes approximately 17,000 VBNs.²

Important to note that VBNs may be a lagging indicator of vacant buildings in the City. One of the chief means of discovering these properties is via citizen complaints in the 311 system, which begins enforcement action by DHCD (Department of Housing and Community Development). However, the goal of the Reinvest Baltimore strategy is to reduce the functional number of VBN's to zero over the course of 15 years. In the midterm by 2030 the goal is to have VBNs at or below 8,000.³

¹ Abell Report

² Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Dashboard

³ Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Dashboard

The Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Council

The Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Council (BVRC) leads several projects in the strategy to reduce the number of vacant properties in the City to “... drive a unified approach to advancing community-based priorities and implementing recommended strategies to maximize investments, reduce vacancy, and promote neighborhood renewal in Baltimore City.”⁴

The Council is comprised of:

- Jake Day, Secretary, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (Council Chair)
- Alice Kennedy, Commissioner, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (Council Vice Chair)
- Portia Wu, Secretary, Maryland Department of Labor
- Rebecca Flora, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
- Gary McGuigan, Executive Vice President, Maryland Stadium Authority
- Tom Sadowski, Executive Director, Maryland Economic Development Corporation
- Jasmin Torres, Assistant Attorney General, Maryland Office of the Attorney General
- Cory McCray, Maryland State Senator, Maryland General Assembly
- Stephanie Smith, Maryland State Delegate, Maryland General Assembly
- Faith Leach, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Baltimore
- Michael Mocksten, Director, Department of Finance, City of Baltimore
- John Bullock, Councilman, Baltimore City Council
- Leslie McMillan, Co-Chair, BUILD
- Mark Anthony Thomas, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Committee
- Matt Gallagher, President & CEO, Goldseker Foundation
- Beth Blauer, Vice President for Public Impact Initiatives, Johns Hopkins University
- Otis Rolley, President & CEO, Baltimore Development Corporation

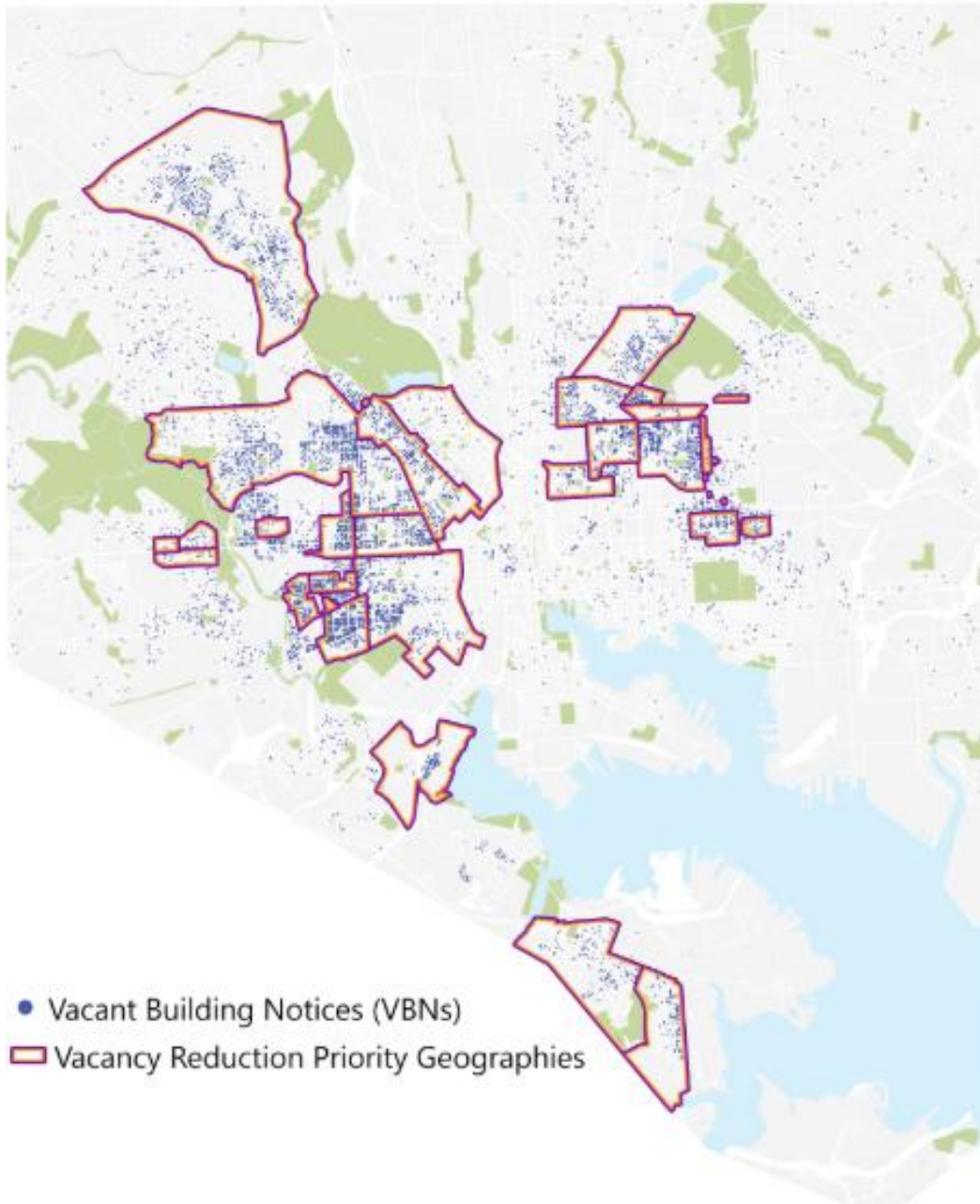
One project being guided by the BVRC is the Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative, which provides capital to community development organizations (CDOs) to redevelop vacant properties in Baltimore. Capital for projects comes from sources such as state and local funding, private funding, and other sources, including \$50 million dollars for the Initiative proposed in Governor Moore’s state budget for FY2027.⁵

The Council lists several high-priority areas, the Vacancy Reduction Priority Geography (VRPG), in the City. In these areas, we have seen the most stabilizations occurring, 267 of 318 completed since 2025. This trend follows suit in acquisition, disposition, receivership, and demolition of vacant properties in the City.⁶

⁴ BVRC Website.

⁵ Maryland FY27 Proposed Budget Highlights

⁶ Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Dashboard



The next meeting of the BVRC is April 20, 2026. In their last meeting in February 2026, BVRC presented the graphic below of how money has been disbursed to grantees. It does list that the DHCD has awarded \$46 million in grant money to the BVRI, but none of that money has yet been disbursed. Total only 29% of the funds contributed to BVRI have been disbursed.⁷

⁷ Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Council 02.10.26 Meeting presentation

BVRI Disbursement to Grantees

Grantee	FY25		FY26		TOTAL		
	Awarded	Disbursed	Awarded	Disbursed	Awarded	Disbursed	% Disbursed
RFA	\$21M	\$9.3M	\$5M	0	\$26M	\$9.3M	36%
MSA	\$9M	\$184K	\$12M	0	\$21M	\$184K	1%
City DHCD	\$20M	0	\$3M	0	\$23M	0	0%
MCIC	0	0	\$30M	\$20M	\$30M	\$20M	66%
TOTAL	\$50M	\$9.5M	\$50M	\$20M	\$100M	\$29.5M	29%

According to the 2025 Baltimore Reinvest Report, the BVRIC has several recommendations for the year 2026 (program year 3). These include (see presentation slides for an inclusive list)⁸:

- Explore the cost of adding a third-party vendor for in rem foreclosure to provide servicing (notices, mailings, etc.).
- Expedite lien removal when a property has a successful in rem foreclosure acquisition judgment, and implement other improvements to the city’s lien removal process.
- Explore options for expediting private property transfer, including the removal of municipal liens, to facilitate vacant property redevelopment.
- Determine the capacity of staffing levels in Baltimore City DHCD and other key partners to ramp up acquisition, disposition, permitting, and other key processes.
- Adopt a Reinvest Baltimore work plan that sets five-year annual goals and establishes measurable outcomes for the city vacancy strategy, aligned with a financial plan. The draft work plan will be presented to the BVRC in October, with adoption in November.

FISCAL NOTE

Baltimore City spends a significant amount of funding on the rehabilitation of vacant properties in the City. These services fall under the Department of Housing and Community Development.

For FY2026:⁹

Service 749 Property Acquisition, Disposition, and Asset Management has a budget of \$9,729,893.

Service 750 Housing Rehabilitation Services has a budget of \$6,122,629.

⁸ Reinvest Baltimore 25 Report

⁹ Adopted Budget Summary

Service 749 “...oversees the sale and acquisition of property used for revitalization. The goal of this service is to support neighborhood revitalization and mixed-income community development through the implementation of the Comprehensive Vacants Reduction & Prevention Strategy.”¹⁰

INFORMATION

1. Abell Foundation Report - Whole Blocks, Whole City: Reclaiming Vacant Property Throughout Baltimore [https://abell.org/publication/reclaiming-vacant-property/#:~:text=Baltimore%20has%20made%20progress%20on%20vacant%20property,and%20leverage%20\\$4.4%20billion%20in%20private%20capital](https://abell.org/publication/reclaiming-vacant-property/#:~:text=Baltimore%20has%20made%20progress%20on%20vacant%20property,and%20leverage%20$4.4%20billion%20in%20private%20capital)
2. Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Dashboard <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiY2YwMWNIZTIzMjFkYy00OTZiLThjMGEtNWM4YzZhNDViMzJjIiwidCI6IjMxMmNiMTI2LWM2YWUtNGZjMi04MDBkLTMxOGU2NzljZTZjNyJ9>
3. Maryland FY 2027 Proposed Budget Highlights <https://dbm.maryland.gov/budget/Documents/operbudget/2027/proposed/FY2027MarylandStateBudgetHighlights.pdf>
4. Adopted Budget Summary FY2026 <https://s3.amazonaws.com/baltimorecity.gov.if-us-east-1/s3fs-public/2026-01/FY2026%20Summary%20of%20the%20Adopted.pdf>
5. FY 2026 Agency Budget Detail vol. 1 https://s3.amazonaws.com/baltimorecity.gov.if-us-east-1/s3fs-public/2026-02/fy2026_agency_detail_volume_i.pdf
6. Reinvest Baltimore 2025 Annual Report (slides in packet)
7. Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Initiative Feb 2026 meeting presentation - <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Reinvest-Baltimore/Pages/Council.aspx>

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Analysis Date: 2/13/2026

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¹⁰ FY26 Agency Detail vol 1.