



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Matthew W. Garbark, Director, Department of Public Works <i>Matthew W. Garbark</i>
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	September 30, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0014R Informational Hearing – Vacant and Abandoned Garages

Position: Without recommendation

BILL SYNOPSIS

This resolution requires that the Department of Housing and Community Development appear before the City Council to provide insight into the issue of vacant and abandoned garages in Baltimore City and to discuss strategies, including in rem liens or foreclosures, to manage and control the issue and its impact on safety, aesthetics, and community economies.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is the lead agency in managing the city's process for securing vacant and abandoned garages. When a vacant or abandoned garage is reported to DHCD or through 311, DHCD investigates and determines if it poses a hazard. If the garage is deemed a safety hazard, the owner is cited and required to take corrective action. If the owner fails to take corrective action after notification, DHCD refers the case to the Department of Public Works (DPW) to secure the property and/or shut off water service.

DPW has handled very few cases involving water shutoffs for garages, as such requests are rare in practice. Unlike other vacant property types, garages typically do not have active water service. While DHCD has the authority to request a shutoff, when necessary, this step has not historically applied to garages, which often lack plumbing connections. The process then focuses on securing the garage itself rather than managing water services.

Once DHCD has referred the vacant garage to be secured, DPW boards and secures the garage within six days of DHCD's notice, consistent with city requirements for vacant properties. Securing vacant garages leads to reduced safety hazards, restricts access, and serves as a deterrent for dumping or unlawful activity.

By coordinating efforts, DHCD and DPW ensure that vacant and abandoned garages are managed effectively and in alignment with the city's broader vacant property strategy.