

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 05-0095R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: President Dixon, Councilmembers Kraft, Clarke, Young, Branch, Curran, Harris,
Holton, Mitchell, Rawlings Blake, Reisinger, D'Adamo, Conaway, Welch

Introduced and read first time: October 17, 2005

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Housing and Community Development

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

Informational Hearing – Low Income Rental Housing

FOR the purpose of inviting the author of “*Low-End Rental Housing: The Forgotten Story in Baltimore’s Housing Boom*” to share with the City Council and the Baltimore public the findings concerning the state of low-income residential real estate rental property in the City; and asking the Baltimore City Housing Commissioner to share with the Council the agency’s response to the report and the efforts the City has made to ensure that decent rental properties are available to low income residents in all neighborhoods throughout the City.

Recitals

Last month the Urban Institute published a research report, funded by the Abell Foundation, on Baltimore’s low-end private rental housing market that held that the problems in this market are wide ranging, and that despite the recent heralding of the “real estate’s rising tide” in Baltimore’s home prices, there is an opposite end of the spectrum where there are an estimated 40,000 low-income renters who cannot afford even the modest rents on their dwellings and who live in substandard housing, or both, and that nearly 20,000 substandard units are renting for less than the median rent.

Even a sustained geographically widespread surge in residential sales will not address the serious problems in the low-end rental market where, according to the author, ½ of all rental units in Baltimore rent for less than \$400 a month, and only 15% rent for more than \$600. These low rents threaten the soundness of the housing stock and a healthful and safe living environment for tenants. Because so many renters are poor, with ½ having incomes below \$20,000, even these low rents for substandard housing are unaffordable to many.

The future of Baltimore’s low rent housing market is precarious at best. Overall, renters are also getting poorer with their median incomes, in real terms, dropping in the past decade; there are about 2 poor renters for every affordable housing unit in the city; more than 16,000 households are on the waiting list for assisted living; nearly ½ of renter households with children are paying more than 30% of their income for rent; and more than 40% of these households are living in physically inadequate housing.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

1 The state of the housing stock is also in a downward spiral. More than 1/3 of the rental stock
2 in Baltimore does not meet basic housing codes of physical adequacy, and with a rate of physical
3 deficiencies 50% higher than that for surrounding subdivisions, Baltimore's rental "bargains" are
4 not luring residents from other regions to relocate to the city.

5 While many of these problems can, in part, be attributed to the aging housing stock all across
6 the United States, Baltimore's problem is particular in that the median age of our housing stock
7 is 50+ years while the median age of housing stock across the country is 30+ years, and 40+
8 years in other central cities. Add to this physical inadequacy, the recalcitrant problems of high
9 crime, abandoned buildings, neglected lots, and the future for Baltimore's low-end housing
10 market does not bode well.

11 This in-depth look into the present and future status of Baltimore's housing market,
12 ironically, offers insight into a longstanding problem that has not been adequately addressed at
13 the same time the federal government is moving to allow state and local government more
14 discretion in using funds earmarked for housing for the poor for a broader range of projects.

15 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
16 author of "*Low-End Rental Housing: The Forgotten Story in Baltimore's Housing Boom*" is
17 invited to share with the City Council and the Baltimore public the findings concerning the state
18 of low-income residential real estate rental property in the City; and asking the Baltimore City
19 Housing Commissioner to share with the Council the agency's response to the report and the
20 efforts the City has made to ensure that decent rental properties are available to low income
21 residents in all neighborhoods throughout the City.

22 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, Sandra
23 J. Newman, Professor of Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies,
24 the Senior Fellows of the Urban Institute, the Chair of the Abell Foundation, the Commissioner
25 of Housing and Community Development, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City
26 Council.