



MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

From: Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner

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Date: May 24, 2023

Re: City Council Resolution 22-0130R Informational Hearing - Routine Maintenance of City-Owned Lots and Buildings

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Resolution 22-0130R which invites representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Planning, the Department of Transportation, the Office of the Comptroller, the Department of Real Estate, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Department of Public Works, the Department of General Services, and other interested parties to discuss the current condition of City-owned lots and buildings, how maintenance of such properties can be improved, and the impact poorly-maintained City-owned lots and buildings have on Baltimore City as a whole.

DHCD is pleased to participate in an informational hearing on how maintenance of such properties can be improved, and the impact poorly maintained City-owned lots and buildings have City wide. While we do not directly provide maintenance such as; boarding, cleaning and mowing services, we work closely with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of city-owned lots and buildings by routing work orders to the agency for cleaning and cutting services.

Background

For the purpose of this informational hearing, DHCD will describe our agency's role in the upkeep and maintenance of City owned vacant lots and City buildings.

City owned lots and buildings

DHCD's Code Enforcement Division, either by response to 311 calls for service, during routine inspections or while patrolling districts, are charged with identifying properties that need property maintenance attention. Code Enforcement conducts over 200,000 Property Maintenance Code Enforcement inspections annually and responds to over 60,000 Code Enforcement Service Requests. So far in FY23, 92% of those SRs have been completed on time. Inspectors submit work orders for DPW, as appropriate, to perform the required maintenance of City owned lots and buildings to include cleaning, boarding and mowing. DHCD inspectors conduct re-inspections of open notices and proactively look for properties needing work orders for DPW to complete the necessary work. The cost of the City cleaning and cutting properties includes staff and equipment costs as well as overhead.

Brandon M. Scott, Mayor | Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner

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Buy into Baltimore & Adopt a lot program

DHCD's Office of Neighborhood Development and Outreach manages the Adopt-A-Lot program which allows residents, businesses or neighborhood groups to steward and care for city-owned vacant lots in their community. There are presently 7,883 MCC-owned vacant lots (8,920 total properties) An Adopt-A-Lot license holder can create community spaces that include, community gardens, clean and green spaces and recreational areas. The maintenance of the adopted lots is the responsibility of the entity that enters into the adopt-a-lot agreement. An interactive map of vacant lots that are available for adoption, lots that are currently adopted and community managed open spaces can be found on DHCD's [website](#). DHCD relies on these partnerships not only to reduce the burden on the City to maintain vacant lots but also to improve living conditions in our neighborhoods.

Public engagement on vacant buildings

Poorly-maintained City-owned lots and buildings, particularly vacant buildings, have a detrimental impact on Baltimore City as a whole. Substandard and dangerous buildings are a nuisance for all of us. When vacant properties are not properly secured and are open to casual and unlawful entry by the public they become even more of a hazard. Not only can these properties attract criminal activity and trespassers, they attract trash and debris, and squatters in vacant buildings can cause fire hazards for the entire community.

As of May 10, 2023 there are 14,188 vacant properties in the City of Baltimore, 1,047 are City owned and the remaining 92% are privately owned. DHCD's capital budget has limited funds to address larger issues such as stabilization or demolition or other maintenance issues like stairs, porch roofs, fences and garages associated with vacant properties.

The City constantly works to ensure that vacant buildings are properly secured. Housing works to get properties into the hands of owners who will properly maintain them. But even with this amount of effort, we will not always immediately know where unlawful entry has occurred or when a vacant property needs to be boarded. The public can report any concerns about maintenance issues by calling 311 or visiting [311 Online](#).

Conclusion

The upkeep and maintenance of city-owned lots and buildings play a significant role in attracting new residents, businesses, and raising property values. DHCD is supportive of discussions around how maintenance of such properties can be improved, and the impact poorly maintained City-owned lots and buildings have on Baltimore City as a whole.

The Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on City Council Resolution 22-0130R.

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cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations