

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 11-0308R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Conaway, Henry, Stokes, Cole, Kraft, Middleton, Welch,  
Clarke, Holton, Branch, President Young

Introduced and read first time: August 15, 2011

Assigned to: Housing and Community Development Subcommittee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Public Works,  
Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of General Services, Health  
Department, Department of Recreation and Parks

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing - Maintenance of City Owned Properties**

3 FOR the purpose of calling on representatives from the Departments of Public Works, Health,  
4 Housing, Recreation & Parks, and General Services to appear before the City Council to  
5 explain the City's current policies for maintaining City owned vacant lots and other  
6 properties; discuss how these properties could be better maintained; and establish a clear and  
7 simple method by which neighbors of City owned properties can quickly and effectively get  
8 their concerns addressed.

9 **Recitals**

10 As part of its ongoing efforts to address the problem of vacant properties in Baltimore, the  
11 City has acquired ownership of hundreds of empty buildings and lots. Many other properties  
12 have been obtained by the City for one purpose or another over the more than two centuries of  
13 Baltimore's existence. All together, the Baltimore Office of Sustainability estimates that the  
14 City owns 11,000 vacant or abandoned properties, as well as hundreds that are still in use. As a  
15 result, every neighborhood in Baltimore is dotted with City owned properties.

16 Regardless of when or why the City came to own a particular bit of land, wherever the City  
17 owns property it is, and should be, expected to show the same respect for its neighbors as any  
18 other property owner in how it uses its land. In the majority of cases it does, and City owned  
19 properties are good neighbors. However, in some cases City owned properties are not as well  
20 maintained as they should be. Sometimes conditions even deteriorate to the point where a  
21 private landowner would be cited for violating the City's health or property maintenance laws.  
22 City owned vacant lots and buildings are a particularly troublesome source of these problems.

23 Allowing the City as a property owner to fall short of the standards that it holds other  
24 property owners to sets a very poor example and can hold back the development of  
25 neighborhoods struggling to improve themselves. Having the City occasionally fall behind on  
26 regular maintenance for seldom visited properties would be troubling on its own; but perhaps  
27 understandable in light of tight municipal budgets and limited numbers of workers able to check  
28 up on the hundreds of City owned properties scattered throughout Baltimore. A more serious  
29 problem though is the sometimes tortuous process that neighbors must go through in order to get

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

## Council Bill 11-0308R

1 the City to clean up one of its properties when its condition has deteriorated to the point that it is  
2 harming their own homes and businesses.

3 When a community is putting in the hard work necessary to maintain their own properties  
4 and keep their neighborhood moving in the right direction it should never be the City owned lot  
5 that is the most rundown property on the block, dragging everyone down by making the  
6 neighborhood less safe and desirable. Yet, when a City owned property does present a problem,  
7 some communities struggle for months just to locate the right person to bring a complaint to.  
8 Then, when a lot is finally cleared, a lawn mowed, or a rat's nest destroyed once, the property  
9 seems to fade out of the officials' consciousness and a lack of regular maintenance allows it to  
10 once again become overgrown or dilapidated - forcing concerned neighbors to start the process  
11 all over again.

12 Understandably, in these neighborhoods the City is not seen as having a clear property  
13 maintenance policy or a workable process for getting complaints permanently resolved. The  
14 City clearly could, and should, do more as a property owner to be a better and more responsive  
15 neighbor and partner in community efforts to improve neighborhoods, rather than being seen as  
16 an obstacle to those efforts.

17 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
18 Council calls on representatives from the Departments of Public Works, Health, Housing,  
19 Recreation & Parks, and General Services to appear before it to explain the City's current  
20 policies for maintaining City owned vacant lots and other properties; discuss how these  
21 properties could be better maintained; and establish a clear and simple method by which  
22 neighbors of City owned properties can quickly and effectively get their concerns addressed.

23 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
24 Director of Public Works, the Health Commissioner, the Director of General Services, the  
25 Housing Commissioner, the Director of Recreation & Parks, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison  
26 to the City Council.