


F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject/ Position:	21-0037R – Informational Hearing – Studying Options to Rid Baltimore City of Vacant Properties FAVORABLE		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

June 29, 2021

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #21-0037R, entitled, “Informational Hearing – Studying Options to Rid Baltimore City of Vacant Properties.” This resolution seeks a discussion regarding “the feasibility of certain specific recommendations to more efficiently and rapidly improve the ability of Baltimore City to remedy vacant dwellings.”

According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the social determinants of health (SDH) are described as “the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”¹ Key SDHs include “safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods”²

Having conducted an exhaustive literature review on housing and vacant properties as SDHs, the Vacant Property Research Network (VPRN) states, “vacant properties and abandoned buildings can become catalysts for crime, neighborhood decline, infestations that trigger disease, along with stress, trauma, and decreases in social capital.”³ Specific to the environmental conditions created by vacant properties, individuals may become susceptible to physical harm including asthma triggers and lead poisoning.⁴

Some of the measures put forth by VPRN to mitigate against the negative public health effects of vacant properties include revisions to code enforcement, demolitions, land banks, and smart decline planning.⁵ With respect to these measures, BCHD believes a larger conversation involving other City agencies and community partners is warranted and urges a **favorable** report for Council Bill #21-0037R.

¹ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). *Social Determinants of Health*. Social Determinants of Health - Healthy People 2030. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>.

² Ibid.

³ de Leon, E., & Schilling, J. (2017, April 11). *Urban Blight and Public Health: Addressing the Impact of Substandard Housing, Abandoned Buildings, and Vacant Lots*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/urban-blight-and-public-health/view/full_report.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.