

June 14, 2022

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair  
Economic and Community Development Committee  
Baltimore City Council  
100 N Holiday St  
Baltimore MD 21202

RE: City Council Bill 22-207

Dear Madam Chair,

Increasing fines will make it harder for me to sell properties with a vacant house notice to a person, whether a developer or a homeowner, who wants to rehabilitate the property and put it back into productive use. Adding \$1,000 per day fine to a seller who is waiting for a buyer to close a transaction is complicating, punitive, and counter-productive. Who in their right mind would purchase a property where the City would fine the new buyer \$1,000 per day?

Selling real estate in Baltimore City for the past 40 years, I have sold many properties on which a vacant house notice has been issued. The properties I have sold have been rehabilitated and are among the many gems of historic properties that we cherish in our City. Council Bill 22-207 incentivizes the owners of such structures to demolish them.

The incentive to demolish becomes more complicated when one owns attached rowhouses. The cost to demolish a structure attached to adjoining property owners becomes prohibitive.

Obtaining approvals and permits for rehabilitation takes a long time in Baltimore City. Why should a buyer pay \$1,000 per day while the City sees no sense of urgency in approving permits?

Piling fines on a property that is already distressed only incentivizes more owners to simply abandon properties, making the problem worse.

The reason we have a vacant house problem in Baltimore City is because so many middle income families have chosen to move out of Baltimore City due to crime, high taxes, and poor performing schools. I encourage the Council to invest its energy addressing the issue of demand. Increasing the demand for housing in Baltimore City by implementing crime measures that have an immediate impact on reducing crime, lowering property taxes, and improving schools will do more to solve our vacant housing problem than punishing people for leaving the City.

Sincerely Yours,



Benedict J. Frederick III, CCIM  
President