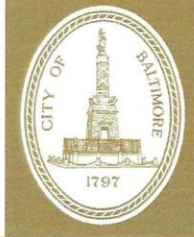


CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT, Mayor



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BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Economic and Community Development

Bill: 21-0037R

Informational Hearing - Studying Options to Rid Baltimore City of Vacant Properties

Sponsor: Councilmember Porter

Introduced: April 5, 2021

Purpose:

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City Law Department, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Department of Health to discuss the feasibility of certain specific recommendations to more efficiently and rapidly improve the ability of Baltimore City to remedy vacant dwellings.

Agency Reports

City Solicitor	Favorable
Department of Finance	Comments
Department of Housing and Community Development	Favorable
Health Department	

Analysis

Background

Bill 21-0037R invites representatives from the Law Department, Department of Housing and Community Development and Department of Health to discuss the feasibility of certain recommendations aimed at eradicating vacant dwellings.

The *Building, Fire and Related Codes of Baltimore City* defines a vacant structure as one which is unoccupied and either unsafe or unfit for human habitation or other authorized use, or is a nuisance property (*Section 116.4.1.2*). A property cited as “vacant” as a result of a violation notice is considered to be abandoned or in need of substantial repair. A vacant structure may not be re-occupied until the vacant violation notice has been abated and an occupancy permit has been issued.

Currently, Baltimore has an estimated 15,000+ vacant homes that contribute to crime and grime. In recent years the City has taken actions (which includes demolitions) to remedy a number of vacancies, however, many more new vacancies have been reported.

The resolution offers the following recommendations for discussion:

- Creating and implementing a sliding scale of fines on unstable vacant property owners.
- Reviewing the City’s receivership process and guidelines to discuss ways to increase the speed of the receivership process by evaluating and amending the timeframe in which a property becomes eligible for receivership.
- Discussing the creation and implementation of a tax on vacant properties that is comparable to the occupied homes and other properties in the area.
- Discussing code enforcement, the issuance of fines and other penalties, and how these fines are triggered and imposed within the lens of better efficiency and fine collection.

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: Not Available

Information Source(s): *Building, Fire and Related Codes of Baltimore City (2020 Edition)*; Bill 21-0037R

Analysis by: Jennifer L. Coates
Analysis Date: June 23, 2021

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