

Resolution #21-0037R

My name is Ashley Esposito and I am a Baltimore City resident from Violetville. I support this resolution because I am concerned with the mental health impact of people living in communities with a high concentration of vacant homes. I have not lived in a blighted community in Baltimore, but I have in another city. It is difficult to feel optimistic about your own future when the surrounding areas are in distress. When I have lived in blighted areas, I have felt hopeless and discouraged. Living in these areas leaves scars that you carry with you forever. Some make their way to other areas, but you always are concerned for neighbors who are still living there. I have been concerned about their safety, opportunities, and the next generation experiencing the same trauma.

As an adult, I have gotten a better understanding of how these communities are created. Disinvestment in communities is so apparent by the rate of home ownership, the number of vacant homes, and other measurable outcomes. I believe it is urgent for Baltimore City to address this issue as soon as possible and thoughtfully. Homes that are vacant but can be repaired, should. Imagine the positive mental health impact on the residents who have lived among a block of vacant homes. Imagine being able to witness your community be revitalized. For the homes that are beyond repair, imagine not worrying that a block of homes could collapse at any minute, become an illegal dumping hot spot, or some other mental burden.

My greatest concern is for the children growing up around vacant homes. As parents we do our best to give our kids “a childhood they don’t have to recover from”. Families cannot control whether another home on their block or in their community becomes vacant. The City of Baltimore can. I urge Baltimore City Council to pass this resolution to dive into the processes that currently exist. Everyone should look for opportunities to remedy blight with the least amount of displacement and pathway to revitalization of all communities.

As an additional suggestion, I would encourage large companies operating and profiting in Baltimore City to look for ways they can also contribute to these efforts by investing NOT for profit, but because it is the neighborly thing to do.