



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

A “Dollar House” Program for the 21st Century

For the purpose of calling on the City to develop a 21st Century “Dollar House” program that could revitalize marginal neighborhoods by matching construction ability at the grass roots of Baltimore to production of affordable housing for workers' families and neighbors.

Recitals

As Baltimore looks to solve the seemingly intractable problem of revitalizing neighborhoods beset by vacant homes, it would do well to look to solutions that have succeeded here in the past. The City’s highly successful “Dollar House” program from the 1980’s could serve as a useful model for true grassroots neighborhood revitalization in the modern era.

In the 80’s the City was able to assist in the transformation of neighborhoods such as Barre Circle, Otterbein, and Ridgely’s Delight from marginal to long term stability by selling large numbers of City owned vacant properties for \$1 each to individuals who agreed to rehab the properties with the assistance of low interest loans from the City and then live in the newly refurbished homes. This effort proved to not only be successful in stabilizing the neighborhoods, but also profitable for the City.

Today, the acquisition of clusters of vacant properties in a number of City neighborhoods has laid the groundwork that could make a second dollar home effort successful once again. If the City were to redirect funding currently earmarked to tear down these properties into 1% interest loans to modern day homesteaders willing to purchase the properties for \$1 and rehabilitate them this proven model could be replicated and the City could save money over the long term.

Pairing these homeownership incentives with construction job training and apprenticeship programs in the targeted neighborhoods could simultaneously provide the two things most needed to turn lives around there - affordable housing and access to meaningful well-paying work. A vacant property rehabbed using local labor for \$100,000 could be paid for with a \$300/month 1% mortgage, an amount easily affordable by someone working steadily on the new construction jobs the program would spur.

A 21st Century “Dollar House” program could use local minority skilled-trades and financing experts to

keep costs down in rehabbing blighted homes for affordable homeownership. It would involve local, minority trades in the City's rehab efforts - so they can salvage their own neighborhoods for affordable sales to local residents. The City needs to take advantage of the opportunity that its acquisition of clusters of vacant properties provides to develop a 21st Century "Dollar House" program that matches construction ability at the grass roots of Baltimore to affordable housing for workers' families and neighbors. History shows that these efforts can be both highly effective and economical over the long term.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council calls on the City to develop a 21st Century "Dollar House" program that could revitalize marginal neighborhoods by matching construction ability at the grass roots of Baltimore to production of affordable housing for workers' families and neighbors.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Housing Commissioner, local and minority skilled construction trades and financing advocates promoting this proposal, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.