Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council (BVRC)

Minutes

April 20, 2026
Greater Baltimore Committee
111 S Calvert St., Suite 1700
Baltimore, MD 21202, USA
11:30 am - 1:00 pm

The meeting recording can be found here: [April 20th BVRC Meeting Recording]

BVRC members in attendance:

- Jake Day, Secretary, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (Council Chair)
- Timothy Keane, Acting Commissioner, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (Council Vice Chair)
- Rebecca Flora, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
- Faith Leach, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Baltimore
- Michael Mocksten, Director, Department of Finance, City of Baltimore
- Leslie McMillan, Co-Chair, BUILD
- Mark Anthony Thomas, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Committee
- Matt Gallagher, President & CEO, Goldseker Foundation
- Beth Blauer, Johns Hopkins University
- Otis Rolley, President & CEO, Baltimore Development Corporation
- John Bullock, Councilman, Baltimore City Council
- Gary McGuigan, Executive Vice President, Maryland Stadium Authority
- Cory McCray, Maryland State Senator, Maryland General Assembly
- Casey Tiefenwerth, Maryland Department of Labor
- Nick Henniger, Maryland Economic Development Corporation

Call To Order

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council Chair Jake Day called the meeting to order.

Adoption of Meeting Minutes

Chair Day called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the February 10, 2026 meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved.

Introduction to Tim Keane, Acting Baltimore City Housing Commissioner

Chair Day introduced the new Baltimore City Acting Housing Commissioner, Tim Keane. Following the introduction of Acting Housing Commissioner Keane, Council members introduced themselves and their roles. Virtual participants included Gary McGuigan from the Maryland Stadium Authority, Rebecca Flora from the Maryland Department of Planning, and Casey Tiefenwerth from the Maryland Department of Labor.

Acting Housing Commissioner Keane expressed gratitude for the opportunity provided by Mayor Scott, noting the Mayor's deep and consistent commitment to Baltimore residents. Acting Housing Commissioner Keane stated that accomplishing the city's vision requires partnerships, and his intention is for DHCD to enable partners—including community development organizations, private builders, small businesses, and the philanthropic community—to move faster and bigger toward shared goals.

Acting Housing Commissioner Keane emphasized that the strategy is focused on whole blocks and whole neighborhoods, staying committed to established targeted geographies, and sequencing properties into a predictable pipeline. He stressed that the data used must be disciplined, transparent, and clearly aligned with the outcome of creating great places where people thrive. The Acting Commissioner discussed holding the city accountable for meeting production targets, improving timelines, and increasing volume, all measured transparently.

Monthly Production Report

Henry Waldron, staff, presented the monthly production report. The current vacant building notice (VBN) count is 11,839, reflecting a 6% decrease since the beginning of the fiscal year. It was noted that we are approximately 80 percent into the fiscal year.

Mr. Waldron reported that the City has completed 127 demolitions and 174 stabilizations to date, showing that they are ahead of the stabilization projection and slightly behind on the demolition projection. It was observed that 127 demolitions year-to-date seems like a modest number, and there was concern about getting the money flowing. Gary McGuigan noted that seasonality affects demolition completion, as projects cannot be turned back to the city until grass seeding occurs. Mr. Gallagher stressed the importance of increasing production numbers.

Faith Leach reported that the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development has exceeded its annual goal for failure to abate citations, which are $1,000 citations issued to owners who have not made progress on rehabbing their VBNs. These citations help properties become eligible for in rem foreclosure or compel owners to rehab or sell the property. CAO Leach discussed some of the challenges associated with tacking VBNs, including technology challenges. The current process is complaint driven. CAO Leach discussed the need to maximize inspectors' time in the field. Secretary Day suggested a future briefing and deep dive on code enforcement, including the tracking of housing inspections and the efficiency of citation issuance.

CAO Leach stated that the vacancy tax implementation will be delayed by a year to ensure it is correctly structured and not become a hindrance for developers mid-process. Henry Waldron discussed acquisition goals for the coming years, showing significant increases, with the city aiming for 510 or more in rem completions this year. Efforts are underway to increase funding and capacity to sustain these targets. The City is close to its goal for acquisitions.

Baltimore City Council member Odette Ramos was invited to provide an update to the BVRC membership about the increase in rem foreclosure capacity at the circuit court. She noted that the State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore have committed funding to the judiciary for new tax sale attorneys, and the magistrate's office is fully staffed at that level, with the goal to handle 200 in rem filings per month (currently at 110 per month). The court process for in rem acquisition takes between six and eight months, though the pre-work and title search process on the city side is currently taking the longest. Ms. Ramos notes that this is groundbreaking work and that Baltimore is leading nationwide.

The City is nearly at its annual disposition goal of 165 properties and is looking to increase the goal to transfer properties faster. A need was identified to better integrate the city and state reports, so that the total goals for acquisition, disposition, and demolition can be compared side-by-side with the activity levels being generated by CDO-funded projects.

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative Progress Report

Kari Snyder reported the BVRI funding round, which closed on April 1st. Ms. Snyder reported that DHCD received 19 applications from current organizations and 28 from new organizations. The applications included 3,552 properties, representing a funding gap of approximately $330 million. The $330 million funding gap includes both properties continued from existing approved lists (FY26 and rolling into FY27) and new properties requested by returning or new organizations for FY27 funding. Of the 3,552 properties submitted, most returning BVRI groups resubmitted properties on their already approved target blocks, with expansion requests coming primarily from two high-producing organizations. The current annual funding is $50 million, which is insufficient to cover the requested subsidy, aligning with typical DHCD capital funding rounds that receive requests three to four times the available amount. DHCD will make award recommendations to the secretary at the end of May, with an announcement expected in June.

Ms. Snyder reported that DHCD asked specific questions to applicants regarding the BVRI values, whole-block strategy, and community involvement in planning and implementation. The program continued to focus on whole block whole neighborhood strategies.

Mr. Gallagher suggested better aligning the State and City dashboards to get a clearer picture of program activity by CDOs in relation to goals and capacity. Secretary Day requested the City and State teams report on the progress of deploying funds through CDOs in FY26.

Kari Snyder and Ira Kowler presented the Monthly BVRI production report. Ms. Snyder began with a discussion of the BVRI funding round which closed on April 1. Ms. Snyder reported that DHCD has deployed the full $30 million in FY26 funding to MCIC. All BVRI CDOs have executed loan agreements with MCIC.

Ms. Snyder reported that the MSA award covers demolition and stabilization, with 156 stabilizations and 133 demolitions funded. MSA has received 21 environmental notices to proceed (ENTPs) for stabilization and 75 notices to proceed (NTPs) for demolition, and has dispersed $184,000 for hazmat work associated with the initial demolitions. The current spending is related to FY25 funds onward, as prior core awards (up to FY24) are still being spent down. Secretary Day stressed the importance of compressing timelines so that funds are expended in the fiscal year they are issued. Ms. Snyder noted that one strategy to reduce delays was working with “on call” demolition and hazmat contractors to respond quickly to requests. This avoids creating a special procurement that can result in delays.

Ms. Snyder stated that the lack of predictability and inconsistent flow of notices to proceed (NTPs) from the City to MSA has prevented MSA from bringing on an on-call demolition contractor, which has resulted in special procurements that add two to four months to the process. Ms. Snyder explained that DHCD is engaged in conversations with the city to establish a multi-year, consistent demolition and stabilization pipeline, which would enable MSA to expedite work. Some approved demolitions require 18 to 24 months of process work, such as acquisition, before they are ready to proceed, highlighting the need to identify near-term demolition opportunities to frontload the pipeline.

Acting Housing Commissioner Keane stated that the City is in discussion to determine the smartest way to invest the $23 million allocated for the City, which was memorialized in an MOU executed in November 2025. The focus is on where the funds can be invested to see quick and clear results. CAO Leach agreed to partner with MSA to create a comprehensive list of all potential demolition properties to establish a sufficient pipeline for on-call contractors, addressing the urgency to accelerate fund flow.

Ira Kowler reported on MCIC disbursements to BVRI CDOs. MCIC's disbursement number is now close to $8.5 million. State and city staff have been holding quarterly coordination meetings with the BVRI CDOs to assign strategies to each property. The coordination helps track the universe of properties, acknowledging that not all will be renovated by the CDO partners and some may be addressed through private action.

Mr. Kowler reported that the property list tracking now includes the full list count and the number of eligible properties for funding, which has increased by approximately 2,250 due to coordination. Production figures show cumulative site control (213 properties), production (construction permit), abatement (UNO), and reoccupation figures, with green indicating an increase since the last presentation.

Reinvest Baltimore Action Plan Implementation

Kari Snyder reported that the action plan adopted in December will now be guided by a completed matrix that includes all actions, responsible parties, and timelines, with a public-facing version to track progress. This matrix will inform BVRC agendas, ensuring that progress on actions is reviewed at key stages, such as the commencement, midway, and completion points.

Ms. Snyder explained that the complexity of the work requires constant evaluation of effectiveness and results, emphasizing the need to address process and execution issues related to spending, demolitions, and stabilizations.

Closing

Chair Day adjourned the meeting.