

# Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council (BVRC)

## Minutes

May 6, 2025  
Greater Baltimore Committee  
111 S Calvert St., Suite 1700  
Baltimore, MD 21202, USA  
11:00 am - 1:00 pm

The meeting recording can be found here: [May 6 BVRC Meeting Recording](#)

BVRC members in attendance:

- Jake Day, Secretary, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (Council Chair)
- Alice Kennedy, Commissioner, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (Council Vice Chair)
- Rebecca Flora, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
- Jasmin Torres, Assistant Attorney General, Maryland Office of the Attorney General
- Faith Leach, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Baltimore
- Michael Mocksten, Director, Department of Finance, City of Baltimore
- Leslie McMillan, Co-Chair, BUILD
- John Bullock, Councilman, Baltimore City Council
- Mark Anthony Thomas, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Committee
- Matt Gallagher, President & CEO, Goldseker Foundation
- Beth Blauer, Associate Vice Provost for Public Sector Innovation & Associate Professor of Practice, Carey Business School
- Cory McCray, Maryland State Senator, Maryland General Assembly
- Stephanie Smith, Maryland State Delegate, Maryland General Assembly
- Otis Rolley, Baltimore City Resident

## Call to Order

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council Chair Jake Day called the meeting to order. He informed the Council that a closed session would occur at the end of the meeting to discuss property acquisition.

## Adoption of Meeting Minutes

Chair Day called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the April 1, 2025 meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the April 1, 2025 minutes were approved.

## Monthly Production Report

Henry Waldron, Director of Research and Analytics for Baltimore City DHCD, presented the monthly production report through the BVRC Dashboard. Chair Day noted that the trend lines on the dashboard always point down at the beginning of the month because they reflect actual data. He inquired as to whether a different data representation would better reflect trends, such as using the last complete month as the final point. Ms. Blauer noted that representing the actual monthly data is still important to monitor real time progress to avoid circumstances where an end-of-month data point is unexpectedly below target. Ms. Blauer suggested the current data could be grayed out while still in progress. Ms. McMillan asked for the total number of stabilizations completed in April 2025. Mr. Waldron reported that 19 stabilizations were completed.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Ms. McMillan asked for the in rem foreclosures acquisition goal for this year. Mr. Waldron responded that the goal is 200 for FY25. Chair Day asked Vice Chair Kennedy to describe Baltimore City's efforts to increase in rem foreclosures in FY26. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the number of attorneys working on in rem foreclosures has quadrupled, including in-house title attorneys. She reported that state funding was made available to expand the court's capacity to handle additional filings, which is being overseen by Ms. Leach and Mr. Mocksten. Ms. Leach thanked Councilwoman Odette Ramos and Delegate Luke Clippinger for their support for the additional funding.

Ms. McMillan asked whether this meant that the capacity to receive in rem foreclosure cases would then be doubled. Ms. Leach responded that the capacity would not be doubled, but the capacity would be increased by three new positions at the courts and positions have been reclassified with Baltimore City DHCD to move more in rem foreclosure cases to the courts. Ms. McMillan asked what the expected capacity for in rem foreclosures within the courts would then be with three additional positions. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that they need to work with the courts to determine how the three new positions would increase capacity. Chair Day stated there needs to be a recordation of the in rem foreclosure productivity increase that results from additional positions at the courts.

Senator McCray asked Vice Chair Kennedy for the number of staff positions previously working on in rem foreclosures and what they had been quadrupled to that would allow 510 in rem foreclosures to occur during FY26. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the 510 in rem foreclosures targeted for FY26 was based on previous staff capacity and the expected capacity increase within Baltimore City DHCD. She stated that three staff members were working on in rem foreclosures and they would be joined by 12 additional staff members to assist in the in rem foreclosure process. Senator McCray asked whether the 12 additional staff members had been hired. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the final three positions were currently in the interviewing process. Senator McCray asked for the total number of employees currently working on in rem foreclosures for Baltimore City DHCD. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that 9 attorneys were currently employed working on in rem foreclosures. Ms. McMillan asked when the increase in the court capacity was expected to happen. Vice Chair Kennedy said the court increases were budgeted for FY26. Ms. McMillan asked if that meant increased capacity should be expected on

July 1st. Ms. Leach indicated that increased capacity should not be expected for July 1st and suggested that the BVRC should take a look at the current staffing levels and capacity of the courts. She suggested that the courts could take two to three months to hire new staff and noted that they are using some of the appropriated funding to convert grant-funded contractual positions to full-time staff. She also stated that the courts could be brought in to present on their capacity. Chair Day stated that he would support having the courts present to the Council.

Senator McCray asked whether the FY26 state funding appropriation for increased court capacity would be a continued commitment and that the City should include such a continued commitment in their 2027 legislative request. Chair Day stated that he hopes the increased funding level could be sustained amidst statewide funding challenges.

Secretary Flora asked if predictive modeling was used to set the goals listed in the dashboard. Ms. Leach asked whether the report prepared by Delivery Associates had been made available to the BVRC members. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the report had been part of the conversation at the last Delivery Chain Working Group meeting, but had not been provided to the whole Council. Chair Day asked whether the report would be provided to the whole Council. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that it would be.

Secretary Flora stated that reviewing the entire vacant reduction system was essential to ensure that all components were being attuned to the ultimate goals. Chair Day stated that the conversation on constraints and obstacles at the July BVRC meeting would likely be a good place to make such systematic considerations and address the Delivery Associates report as full Council.

Vice Chair Kennedy suggested that the conversations at the upcoming Delivery Chain working group meetings would likely inform the July BVRC meeting. Mr. Gallagher stated that the Delivery Chain working group had not yet seen the Delivery Associates workflow analysis. Ms. Leach informed the board that the Delivery Associates report created a staffing model for City DHCD to increase capacity sufficiently and that the city's FY26 budget includes additional positions recommended by the report. She stated that next year's staffing model would still be insufficient but that capacity is increasing. Chair Day suggested that the Delivery Associates report be made available to the Council with plenty of time before the July meeting to allow for additional review. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the Delivery Associates report was one of the several deliverables being prepared by City DHCD after the April Delivery Chain Working Group meeting that can be shared with the whole Council.

Mr. Gallagher asked if the the vacants dashboard included the stats reported during the review of the Block Level Planning process. Mr. Waldron confirmed that the block level planning data was reflected in the dashboard. Mr. Gallagher asked when the hiring process for the FY26-funded positions starts. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that City DHCD was currently working to create position descriptions and PIN numbers so that the hiring process can begin. Chair Day stated that State DHCD has previously listed available positions prior to July 1st to allow for a soon as possible start date, but he was not aware whether such a process has been taken by

the courts. Senator McCray stated that the BVRC should reach out to the courts to let them present the timeline for hiring and onboarding the new staff. Chair Day suggested that the courts could present to the Council in June. Ms. Leach stated that hiring has not begun for the new City positions because they have not yet been funded, but that City DHCD could reprioritize position listings to get the newly created positions listed right away.

## Working Group Updates

Chair Day invited Ms. Blauer to provide an update on the Data Working Group. Ms. Blauer presented an update on the April meeting of the Data Working Group, noting that the working group members would like to provide data services to other working groups and make a data request form available to the working group chairs. She also noted that the Data Working Group would only assist with ensuring that the other working groups can make data-informed recommendations, but they would not determine the content of the other working groups' reporting.

Chair Day invited Mr. Thomas and Ms. McMillan to present about the April meeting of the Financing Working Group. Mr. Thomas reported that the working group had discussed a review of how the \$3 billion capital stake for the vacancy reduction plan was derived. Ms. McMillan reported that the working group's members have a variety of financing backgrounds and time was spent at the April meeting on introductions. Chair Day made note of Mr. Thomas' and the Greater Baltimore Committee's efforts to bring together stakeholders to consider private financing for the vacancy reduction efforts. Ms. McMillan reported that conversations between BUILD, the Greater Baltimore Committee, and area banks have been productive.

Chair Day invited Mr. Rolley to present about the April meeting of the Economic Opportunity Working Group. Mr. Rolley reported that the working group had determined additional membership and reviewed the scoping document. Chair Day noted that there would be a need for close partnership with the Data Working Group to ensure that sufficient information about the current construction contracting market in Baltimore is available.

Chair Day invited Mr. Gallagher to present about the April meeting of the Delivery Chain working group. Mr. Gallagher stated that the working group reviewed their scope, which includes evaluating various delivery chains to increase activity levels and prioritize the biggest and highest yield opportunities. Mr. Gallagher stated that during the meeting the city described process improvement work and mapping work that has already occurred and the working group looks forward to reviewing that information so they do not recreate any completed work.

Chair Day requested that the Working Group chairs consider the overall staffing needs that their working groups will need to be effective. Ms. Blauer requested that available staff are given the ability to focus on the needs of the working groups. Chair Day confirmed that State DHCD would focus on the needs of the working groups. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed that City DHCD staff would also be afforded the ability to focus on the needs of the working groups. Ms. McMillan asked if State and City DHCD staff had been assigned to each working group. Chair Day

confirmed that State DHCD staff had been assigned to the working groups. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed that City DHCD staff had been assigned to the working groups. Ms. McMillan noted that the first working group meeting had included a large number of staff members and noted that she was unsure who was assigned to staff the committee and who was just observing. Chair Day stated that the list of assigned staff would be made available to the BVRC.

## BVRI Update

Chair Day presented on the FY25 Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative (BVRI) funding round. He noted the importance of the \$50 million included in the annual budget and thanked Senator McCray and Delegate Smith for their support in the General Assembly. Chair Day reported on the distribution of FY25 BVRI funding between City DHCD, the Maryland Stadium Authority, and community development organizations. Mr. Gallagher asked if the state could demonstrate the number of VBNs abated with FY25 funding to compare with FY26 funding, which prioritizes the abatement of VBNs. Chair Day noted that the total VBNs abated by the CDOs who received FY25 BVRI funds would likely be fairly small, but that the acquisition of VBNs by the City funded by FY25 BVRI would lead to VBN abatements. Mr. Gallagher stated that reviewing the total number of VBNs the City currently intends to acquire with FY25 BVRI funds would be sufficient as a stand-in for the total number of VBNs expected to be abated. Chair Day stated that the expected number of VBN acquisitions by the City with FY25 funds could be provided right away.

Mr. Mocksten asked whether the number of VBNs abated using Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative (BRNI) funds could be demonstrated. Chair Day confirmed that such an analysis would be possible for historical state funding and for FY25 awards. Mr. Rolley asked what funding was associated with four points on the map in northwest Baltimore outside of the Vacants Reduction Priority Geographies (VRPGs). Carol Gilbert, Assistant Secretary, MD DHCD, responded that State DHCD staff could identify those points and report back to Mr. Rolley and BVRC. Chair Day stated that the list of FY25 BVRI awards outside of the VRPGs would be made available to the full BVRC. Ms. Gilbert reported that a link was available in the powerpoint to all of the FY25 State Revitalization Program awards. Mr. Rolley asked when the FY26 awards would be announced. Chair Day responded that the FY26 application period closes on May 23rd and the announcement will be made in June, with funds available by July 1st.

## Closed Session

Chair Day asked for a motion to close the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(2), 3-305(b)(3), 3-305(b)(5), and 3-305(b)(8) in order to discuss property-level data from Baltimore City's FY26 Block Level Planning process. Mr. Bullock moved as such and Mr. Rolley seconded.

Time of closed session: 12:10 PM

Place: Greater Baltimore Committee Office, 111 S Calvert St., Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202, USA

Purpose(s): to discuss property-level data from Baltimore City's FY25 and FY26 Block Level Planning process.

Members who voted to meet in closed session: Jake Day, Alice Kennedy, Rebecca Flora, Jasmin Torres, Faith Leach, Michael Mocksten, Leslie McMillan, John Bullock, Mark Anthony Thomas, Matt Gallagher, Beth Blauer, Cory McCray, Stephanie Smith, and Otis Rolley.

Persons attending closed session: All members; MD DHCD Assistant Sec. of Neighborhood Revitalization Carol Gilbert, City DHCD Dir. of Research and Analytics Henry Waldron, City DHCD Program Manager Victoria Olivier, City DHCD Deputy Commissioner of Development Wendi Redfern, MD DHCD Project Manager Alexandra Laham, MD DHCD Preservation Officer Melissa Archer, MD OAG Assistant Attorney General Ruhe Mauck, MD DHCD Dir. of Community & Economic Development Partnerships Kari Snyder, MD DHCD Program Officer David Birkenthal, City DHCD Research Analyst Cleopatra Ibukun, MD OAG Assistant Attorney General Kallie Butts, City DHCD Home Ownership Coaching Fellow Dalmar James

Authority under § 3-305 for the closed session: #s 2,3, 5, and 8.

Topics actually discussed: (1) Property-level data from Baltimore City's FY25 and FY26 Block Level Planning process, (2) formatting and structure of the presentation

Actions taken: None

Each recorded vote: None

## Closing

Chair Day stated that the next meeting of the BVRC will be on Tuesday, June 3. Chair Day adjourned the meeting.