

# Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council (BVRC)

## Minutes

July 1, 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: [July 1st 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)
- Carter Reitman, 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, Associate Vice Provost for Public Sector Innovation & Associate Professor of Practice, Carey Business School
- John Bullock, Councilman, Baltimore City Council
- Stephanie Smith, Delegate, Maryland House of Delegates
- Otis Rolley, President & CEO, Baltimore 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 June 3, 2025 meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the June 3, 2025 minutes were approved.

## FY25 Review & FY26 Priorities

Chair Day presented a review of the progress made by the Council in FY25. He noted the creation of shared definitions and data management, the creation of the working groups, and the review of City DHCD priorities. He also noted the announcement of the new \$100 million loan fund with GBC and BUILD.

Chair Day presented the FY26 priorities for the Council. He provided upcoming timelines for the BVRI program and noted that the Council would be tasked with supporting the creation of a Reinvest Baltimore Work Plan. Ms. Blauer noted that the Council is tasked with creating an annual report and stated that the Data Working Group that she chairs would be working on this effort. Ms. McMillan asked whether other working group chairs need to send desired inclusions in the annual report. Ms. Blauer confirmed that they did and requested any desired inclusions be sent to her by August. She asked for confirmation of the due date for the annual report. Kari Snyder, staff, stated that the annual report is due to the Governor by September 30th. Ms. Blauer asked all of the working group chairs to add consideration of the annual report to their upcoming meeting agendas. Chair Day confirmed that Working Group chairs should expect to send updates to the Data Working Group in August.

Ms. Blauer stated that she expects the Council's work in FY26 to focus less on procedural efforts and more on practical improvements. Ms. McMillan noted that the Council needs to consider issues with permitting and acquisition. CAO Leach asked whether an outline for the annual report could be developed prior to the August Council meeting. Chair Day confirmed that an outline could be created. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that a full review of the annual report could then be at the September BVRC meeting. Chair Day confirmed that a discussion of the final draft could be held in September. Ms. Blauer noted that the annual report will include priorities for the upcoming year, so a discussion of those priorities needs to be held beforehand. Chair Day noted that the Reinvest Baltimore workplan will include priorities for the upcoming year and those should be reflected in the annual report.

Chair Day stated that he has heard from other Council members that analyzing and visualizing the processes that are impeding progress on vacancy reduction is a priority. Ms. Blauer noted that the Council should prioritize leveraging the assembled skills and expertise of those on the Council. CAO Leach suggested that the Council takes time in August to hold a retreat to reevaluate the Council's direction. Ms. McMillan asked whether CAO Leach intended for Council members to participate in this retreat. CAO Leach responded that the group could work on reimagining the Council's role together. Chair Day noted that there may be Open Meeting Act concerns, but that this sort of reevaluation is possible as long as it doesn't slow down the ongoing work. Ms. McMillan agreed that the ongoing work should not be slowed down and that she is aware of ongoing projects that need additional attention. She noted that the current permitting concerns are slowing down development projects that are receiving funds. Mr. Gallagher stated that he was enthusiastic about the creation of a work plan to allow for the measurement of progress. He noted that there is not currently an executable plan to address the vacancy crisis. He noted that he wanted to use Council meeting time to compare actual progress to planned progress and to discuss reasons for any differences. Chair Day confirmed

that he was also eager for the creation of the Reinvest Baltimore Work Plan. He noted that the continued creation of shared goals will be invaluable for the continued execution of a work plan. Mr. Gallagher noted that the Delivery Chain Working Group is preliminarily reviewing 21 acquisition and disposition processes and there will need to be additional focus on a few at a time to provide recommendations for improvement. Chair Day asked whether there are obstacles or processes that have been identified that will impede the success of new resources. Mr. Gallagher noted that the FY26 BVRI awards will serve as specific examples or illustrations of challenges in the redevelopment process. Del. Smith noted that the neighborhood subcabinets allow for real time troubleshooting with individual communities, and a similar model might make sense for the BVRI awardees. Councilman Bullock noted that the neighborhood subcabinet model has been helpful for elected officials to collaborate with all the relevant stakeholders at once. Chair Day asked which agencies are represented at the neighborhood subcabinet. CAO Leach stated that the neighborhood subcabinet brings together City agencies and community representatives.

Ms. McMillan stated that requested updates on permits provided to the City have not been completed. CAO Leach stated that she would ensure that an update is provided if the list is sent along.

Ms. Blauer asked whether the suggestion was for the Delivery Chain Working Group to identify three to five processes that would be brought to the neighborhood subcabinet meetings for review and on-the-ground analysis. She also stated that she is concerned whether there is sufficient site control to exhaust the FY26 BVRI funds. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the BVRI awards are not attached to the City's vacant house inventory, but that the workflow for negotiated acquisition on the private market can be considered.

CAO Leach stated that the neighborhood subcabinet meeting could be used to assemble the relevant groups that may know about the impediments to completing specific identified BVRI projects in a community. She stated that the neighborhood subcabinets would not need to consider the three to five processes being reviewed by the Delivery Chain Working Group. Ms. Blauer stated that the neighborhood subcabinets could confirm whether proposed solutions to obstacles are working on the ground. Chair Day stated that having the particular group of stakeholders assembling to discuss particular projects will allow for the scaling up of process improvement. Ms. Blauer stated that she agreed with Chair Day and wanted to ensure that this plan would be reflected in an actual strategy that allows for information to flow to the Council. CAO Leach stated that the Council should find additional time to spend in a more in-depth consideration of the Reinvest Baltimore Work Plan. Del. Smith stated that a smaller group of Council members may be best suited to spending additional time reviewing the work plan.

Chair Day stated that he appreciated the Council's desire to focus on FY26 and believed additional focus could be used on the process that could impede the completion of the FY26 BVRI projects. He stated that a group of awarded organizations will begin to gather to discuss process improvements. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the Council members will be instrumental in moving this work forward over the coming year.

## Monthly Production Report

Henry Waldron, staff, presented the monthly production report through the BVRC Dashboard. Chair Day stated that at the June Council meeting information on the trade off between FTA and other citation issuance was requested. Mr. Waldron provided metrics showing no considerable dropoff in other citation issuance as a result of the increase in FTA issuances. Ms. McMillan asked what the result of citation issuance is most regularly. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that citations can be paid or accrued as leans. Ms. McMillan asked about the frequency of citations. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that City DHCD attempts to avoid issuing citations to non-profit partners acquiring property for redevelopment. Ms. Blauer asked whether this was a way to determine whether the downward trend in sanitation citations reflects a performance issue. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the staff capacity has been low in recent years due to staffing shortage, but the expectation for FY26 is full staffing in code inspection. CAO Leach stated that the full staffing of the code enforcement team will allow inspection efforts to focus on more complicated citations, rather than high grass and weeds concerns.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Chair Day noted that the large increase in expected in rem foreclosures likely necessitates the inclusion of in rem in the first set of processes to be reviewed by the Delivery Chain Working Group.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Chair Day noted that the proposed rate of acquisition exceeds the rate of disposition. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the use of Land Disposition Agreements means that the developer of a property may have site control, but that the city can maintain ownership to decrease carrying costs for the developer. She also noted that City DHCD will continue reviewing the acquisition and disposition projections. Chair Day stated these numbers should be reviewed in order for inclusion in the Reinvest Baltimore Work Plan and upcoming annual report. Mr. Waldron noted that consolidation of properties by the city, from 10 acquired lots into 1 disposed lot, will also reduce the disposition projections. Ms. Blauer asked whether decreases in the acquisition and disposition totals between May and June have been accounted for. Mr. Waldron stated that he wasn't sure whether there was an outlier increase in May.

Vice Chair Kennedy presented draft changes to the vacancy dashboard to distinguish activity on Block-Level Planning priority blocks and citywide vacancy reduction efforts. Mr. Thomas asked whether the data displayed regarding whole block outcomes was accurate or was just a placeholder. Ms. Blauer responded that the data was accurate, but that the data representation method was in draft form. Mr. Waldron indicated that the presentation included citywide, vacancy reduction priority geographies (VRPG), and priority block data. Mr. Thomas stated that though the data representation is in draft form, it would be beneficial to hear from staff on the data that is available. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the developers who had expected to receive several of the expected property disposals have asked to delay their receipt. Chair Day noted that the high focus in VRPGs, but not on priority blocks, is likely because the block prioritization has only been recently decided. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed this timeline and stated that the focus on priority blocks would begin to increase moving forward. Mr. Thomas asked how many communities are being impacted by the efforts currently. Vice Chair Kennedy

stated that there is activity in every single VRPG community. Mr. Thomas stated he was curious about targeting, since the resources are not available to impact every community. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that state funding directed on priority blocks would lead to large increases in activity on priority blocks. Chair Day noted that FY26 resources will be clearly targeted. Vice Chair noted targeting has also been in collaboration with communities to determine ground-level priorities. She stated that City and State DHCD staff will work on how best to display data showing all vacancy reduction investments.

## Working Group Updates

Chair Day invited Mr. Rolley to provide updates from the Economic Opportunity Working Group. Mr. Rolley informed the Council that the Working Group had not been able to meet in the previous month, but that they intended to discuss the outstanding data requests during the July meeting.

Chair Day invited Ms. Blauer to provide updates from the Data Working Group. Ms. Blauer stated that every Working Group chair has received the data request form that they can use to send data requests to the Data Working Group. She also presented a data inventory that lists all of the data related to the vacancy reduction that is already available. She presented a list of existing requests and stated that in future meetings this list will include whether or not these requests have been satisfied. Chair Day asked Ms. Blauer what her largest challenges have been. Ms. Blauer responded that often the data is simply not currently available or there may be no good way to answer requestors' questions. She stated that once the Delivery Chain identifies the three to five key processes, the Data Working Group will be well-suited to provide information in a standardized format.

Chair Day invited Mr. Gallagher to present on the Delivery Chain Working Group. Mr. Gallagher stated that City DHCD staff have developed a list of 21 processes, and provided information on the current and optimal timelines for each. He stated that the Working Group has requested information on the volume of properties going through each process, though this information has not been finalized. Chair Day asked whether the in rem process map that has been created includes time spent for each step in the process. Mr. Gallagher stated that level of detail was possible, but was not available yet. Chair Day stated that this type of process mapping can be complicated because of overlapping and concurrent steps. He thanked the working group and City DHCD staff for their work.

Chair Day invited Ms. McMillan and Mr. Thomas to present on the Finance Working Group. Ms. McMillan informed the Council that consultants from Forsyth Street presented to the Working Group on financial products needed for vacancy reduction. Mr. Thomas stated that GBC will conduct additional due diligence on the process to create the funds recommended by Forsyth. He also stated that the Working Group would get a better understanding of the current financing available in Baltimore and create recommendations on how to best leverage these existing resources to address the vacancy reduction goals.

## Closing

Chair Day stated that all BVRC members are invited to the upcoming BVRI announcement event on July 8. Chair Day adjourned the meeting.