

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council (BVRC)

Minutes

October 14, 2025
Baltimore Unity Hall
1505 Eutaw Pl.
Baltimore, MD 21217, USA
11:00 am - 1:00 pm

The meeting recording can be found here: [October 14 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
- Faith Leach, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Baltimore
- Michael Mocksten, Director, Department of Finance, City of Baltimore
- Leslie McMillan, Co-Chair, BUILD
- 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
- Cory McCray, Maryland State Senator, Maryland General Assembly

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 September 3, 2025 meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the September 3, 2025 minutes were approved.

Monthly Production Report

Henry Waldron, staff, presented the monthly production report. Ms. McMillan asked whether new VBNs had been issued over the last month. Mr. Waldron confirmed that new VBNs had been issued.

Chair Day asked whether the FY26 demolition progress number reflects planned demolitions or those that have occurred this fiscal year. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the 64 completed demolitions in 2024 are all city funded. CAO Leach asked for confirmation that these demolitions included emergency demolitions. Mr. Waldron confirmed that emergency demolitions and stabilizations are included in the respective FY26 completion numbers. CAO Leach confirmed that demolitions listed as completed are fully completed rather than just having received a Notice to Proceed. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed that the demolitions the City has reported as completed have been fully completed on the ground. CAO Leach asked whether demolitions that were completed in July or August could have been planned in previous years. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed that this timeline was likely for demolitions completed by MSA. She also noted that stabilizations with state BVRI funding have not yet started.

CAO Leach asked for the total number of BVRI funded demolitions for FY26. Kari Snyder, staff, stated that 156 demolitions are currently approved for FY25/FY26 BVRI funding along with 3 large site projects. CAO Leach asked if any Notices to Proceed had been issued for these demolitions. Ms. Snyder stated that no Notices to Proceed had been issued for demolition but 17 had been issued for stabilization. CAO Leach asked whether all 156 would be completed in FY26. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that some demolitions may be completed in future fiscal years depending on delays in due process. Chair Day noted that demolition activity can be highly variable. CAO Leach asked when MSA can start the procurement process for demolitions. Ms. Snyder stated that MSA has reported they can begin the procurement process prior to the issuance of an Notice to Proceed if a list of upcoming property releases can be provided to them. She also stated that in prior meetings City DHCD staff have stated that a list of 110 upcoming demolition releases can be provided from which MSA could begin the procurement process.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. CAO Leach asked whether emergency, planned, and state-funded demolitions could be broken out in the demolition reporting on the dashboard. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that change could be made.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. CAO Leach asked whether the reported 156 in rem acquisitions were completed or placed in the pipeline. Mr. Waldron stated that the 156 were completed and that the full pipeline could be viewed on the acquisitions tab of the dashboard. Ms. McMillan asked for an update on the hiring for the Court staff. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the process of posting the new openings was still being worked out among various City departments and the courts. Ms. McMillan asked to confirm that the opening had not been posted yet. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed this and stated that the City was working with them because there was a need for additional administrative support.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that City DHCD has completed two developer RFQs for Penn North and for Coldstream Homestead Montebello. She stated this would increase dispositions month-over-month. Chair Day asked if the projected increase could currently be quantified. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that there should be approximately 200 more dispositions, some of which will also receive BVRI or TIF funding for rehabilitation. Chair Day asked if this was still about a fifth of City DHCD's current vacant property holdings. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed that was correct.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Chair Day asked for confirmation that the intended change over time of acquisitions was for properties within the VRPGs. Mr. Waldron confirmed this and stated that additional breakdown of the location of properties being acquired by the City could be represented on the dashboard. Ms. Blauer noted that the Council should also see a decrease in the percentage of total acquisitions occurring outside the VRPGs. Chair Day noted that work outside of the VRPGs will still continue to exist even as acquisitions inside the VRPGs increase. Mr. Waldron stated that the ongoing volume of acquisitions occurring outside of the VRPGs is likely a result of in rem foreclosure process that started prior to the new prioritization.

New York Investor Situation

Chair Day stated that Baltimore City and the state are closely tracking the properties impacted by the New York investors situation. Vice Chair Kennedy reviewed summary points on the NY Investor situation for discussion.

Chair Day asked whether City DHCD would add impacted VBN properties in the VRPGs to their eligible property list for BVRI funding. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that this change does not need to be made at this time and that the ongoing foreclosure cases would likely impact the City's acquisition effort for any particular property. Chair Day stated that these properties may become FY27 BVRI funding targets.

Ms. Blauer asked whether the in rem eligibility is impacted by the inflated evaluation of these properties. Vice Chair Kenney stated that the next round of analysis is reviewing the assessed value of each property, but that the liens on these particular properties are low on average and the markets the properties are in are stronger markets in the VRPGs, so there is likely limited in rem opportunity. Ms. Blauer stated that reassessment should occur for all of the properties because 700 inflated values may be affecting the assessment of other properties and thereby shifting what is in rem eligible.

Vice Chair Kennedy stated that City DHCD plans to work with SDAT to reevaluate potentially inflated appraisals. She also stated that pursuing condemnation is an option, but that this process does not necessarily work while a foreclosure case is open, though this process could potentially be funded by BVRI. Ms. McMillan asked to confirm that if an opportunity for property acquisition presents itself, the City will act on it. Chair Day asked to confirm the number of properties that have VBNs and the number of properties on priority blocks due to discrepancies in the presented document. Mr. Waldron stated that the number of properties with a VBN was 91

and he believes the number of properties on the priority blocks was 153, but that the discrepancy was due to the increase in priority blocks based on BVRI CDO awards. Chair Day stated that the City and the State have an obligation to continue updating the Council on the New York Investor Situation.

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council

Chair Day introduced Ms. Snyder and Michael Pokorny, President and CEO of the Maryland Community Investment Corporation. Ms. Snyder and Mr. Pokorny presented on the progress of the Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative. Ms. Snyder informed the BVRC of the FY25 and FY26 BVRI funds awarded by State DHCD and reported on their progress.

Mr. Pokorny presented on the loans executed and the funds disbursed to CDOs awardees. Ms. McMillan asked whether additional loans would be made after the CDO awardee has abated the vacant and redeveloped the house. Mr. Pokorny responded that since the revolving loan needs a repayment event, the two instances for which a loan can be forgiven are after purchase by the CDO and after sale by the CDO. Ms. McMillan asked to confirm that a property must be sold or rented to forgive the loan. Mr. Pokorny confirmed that as the BVRI program is currently designed, forgiveness is only permitted at sale or refinance for rental, but he stated that several CDO awardees have requested forgiveness at other points, such as at the issuance of a use and occupancy permit. Ms. McMillan stated that the forgiveness of the loan and sale and the subsequent disbursement of funds slows down the vacant rehabilitation process. Mr. Pokorny stated that the measure of success for the program was an open conversation, as several unoccupied homes may not contribute to neighborhood stability more than a house with a VBN.

Ms. Snyder continued presenting on the Baltimore Vacant Reinvestment Initiative. CAO Leach stated that the City can work with State DHCD to expedite permitting for BVRI-funded projects and asked how the CDOs determine the approved list and how often the list can be changed. Ms. Snyder stated that the lists can be updated at any time and that the CDOs submitted their property list through their initial BVRI applications. CAO Leach asked whether the CDOs already have some properties under site control. Ms. Snyder stated that of the 290 properties in Phase 1, 153 were under site control, meaning they are owned by the CDOs. She also stated that City DHCD does have the approved property list. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that activity has occurred on several properties on the City's approved BVRI list, but not with BVRI funds, so updates will need to be made to the list.

Ms. McMillan asked whether City DHCD was also engaging in a whole blocks process. Ms. Snyder stated that the reported whole blocks progress captured any block where BVRI funding had been approved for City DHCD, MSA, or the CDO awardees. CAO Leach asked whether Ms. McMillan was referring to a way to analyze the multi-layered resource commitments to track and measure progress on creating whole blocks. Ms. McMillan asked whether the City and State DHCDs have one consolidated list of properties. Ms. Snyder stated that the City and State have one consolidated list of properties and that the BVRI blocks represent a subset of the VRPGs. Vice Chair Kennedy stated the presented data reflected just the BVRI investments in the VRPGs and that City and State DHCD staff were coordinating to better relate their data tracking.

CAO Leach suggested that at a quarterly BVRC meeting, the City could present on the progress of the broader vacancy reduction strategy. Chair Day stated that this process would align with the updates currently planned for the November BVRC meeting.

Mr. Pokorny informed the Council of the progress made on the BVRI Support Fund.

Reinvest Baltimore Action Plan

Chair Day presented the next steps for the review of the Reinvest Baltimore Action Plan. He stated that BVRC members would be asked to review the Action Plan and provide feedback before the November meeting. He asked Mr. Mocksten to work with staff to present on the city's financial modeling for the vacancy effort at the November meeting. Chair Day said the plan is scheduled to be approved at the December BVRC meeting, and that once the plan is final, State DHCD staff will create an implementation matrix.

He stated that the Action Plan is designed around six objectives, and during this portion of the meeting, the BVRC would respond to guiding questions for each topic, though members were free to provide feedback as they saw fit. On the Vacancy Reduction section, he asked for any additional barriers to be addressed in this section. CAO Leach stated that the plan would also need to address the opportunity for policy changes in addition to considering current processes. Chair asked to confirm that CAO Leach meant policy changes that may create new processes or fundamentally change existing processes. CAO Leach confirmed that this was her intention. Chair Day stated that many processes may be specific to Baltimore. Ms. Blauer stated that there was still not a strong understanding of the total universe of vacant houses, but that there is data available to better understand the baseline. Chair Day said he thought this sort of analysis could fit into the first section. Ms. Blauer stated that an understanding of the total would provide a better estimate for how many properties need to be addressed with public investment. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the City's Innovation Team is working on vacancy prevention, which may assist the effort to determine the total number of vacants. CAO Leach noted that City DHCD has also developed processes to estimate the total number of vacants.

Ms. Blauer noted that the Data Working Group has been informed of legal restrictions on sharing household level water data, but finding a way to review this data with de-identification will be important. Mr. Waldron stated that he believes City DHCD staff have access to the water billing data, but that sharing with a larger group would likely be an issue. Ms. Blauer noted that acquiring electricity usage data would also be helpful.

Ms. McMillan asked whether in rem foreclosure serves as the primary acquisition strategy or if there are other strategies. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that in rem is an important tool in part due to the low cost, but that there are several acquisition tools. She stated that Baltimore City's FY26 BVRI request was primarily for negotiated acquisition. CAO Leach asked Ms. McMillan whether she believes we should explore other acquisition methods. Ms. McMillan stated that better acquisition methods are needed to support CDOs. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that of the approximately 12,000 VBNs citywide, about 2,900 of them are in rem eligible. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that CDOs can pursue properties they are approved for to attempt a private

acquisition, but if that is unsuccessful then the City may be able to step in through condemnation. She also stated that reviewing the workflow for condemnation as it has been done for in rem may be important.

Ms. McMillan asked how the 2,900 in rem eligible properties can be moved through the in rem process. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the work of the Council to review process improvement will be important to that effort.

Mr. Gallagher stated that the last year of the Council's work has largely been spent in a review and assessment mode, and that the Council should focus on execution moving forward. Chair Day asked if Mr. Gallagher saw a way to incorporate this feedback into the Action Plan. Mr. Gallagher stated he believed it was procedural and staffing related. Chair Day stated he believed a way to include Mr. Gallagher's feedback in the Action Plan could be found. Mr. Mocksten asked where additional tracking of funding disbursement could be included. Chair Day asked where Mr. Mocksten believes such an addition could be made. Mr. Mocksten suggested the plan could explicitly incorporate the existing Sources and Uses budget. Vice Chair Kennedy suggested expanding the Capacity for Action section to include the financial capacity for a sources and uses analysis. Chair Day suggested that an additional section may be needed to capture sources and uses analysis. Ms. Blauer stated that the tracking of impact in prioritized areas could be expanded to tracking funds in prioritized areas. Mr. Mocksten asked for the definition of acquisition used in the section. Chair Day stated that acquisition referred to City and private acquisition.

Chair Day asked whether the stated permitting strategy reflects the challenges that developers face. Ms. McMillan stated that BUILD has not yet received an update on what improvements are needed for the permitting processes. Chair Day stated that while the portion regarding permitting was relatively brief in the Action Plan, there is a growing number of impediments that the CDOs are encountering. Ms. McMillan stated that BUILD has shared feedback from the CDOs and that they have an upcoming meeting with CAO Leach to discuss these comments. She also asked when comments on the Action Plan were due. Chair Day stated that comments were needed by October 31. CAO Leach stated that the City would provide additional feedback before November, but that another potential addition would be ways to coordinate between State and City DHCD to expedite BVRI-funded properties.

Vice Chair Kennedy stated that City DHCD has requested that the permit application process includes a place for applicants to note if they have state funding. Ms. McMillan stated that an expedited process for BVRI-funded properties would lead to an increase in production by the CDOs. CAO Leach stated that she could commit to spending time to determine how permit approvals for BVRI-funded properties could be expedited or if that would be possible. Chair Day stated that the Action Plan contains a section about identifying portions in the permit review process that could be reduced for BVRI-funded properties. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that there will also likely need to be a technical assistance portion because the permitting process should be collaborative and ensuring submittals are complete is important. CAO Leach stated that the

City would provide a series of recommendations of how the permitting timelines could be reduced and how to incorporate support for the technical assistance process.

Chair Day asked the Council to consider the Thriving Neighborhoods section of the Action Plan. Mr. Mocksten noted that BRNI funding should be incorporated into the financial section of the Action Plan.

Chair Day asked for comments on the Thriving Households Section of the Action Plan. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that a number of the actions in this section were those that had been identified as potentially fundable by the philanthropic community. She also noted that support is needed for the legal work needed to prevent vacancy, such as estate planning. Ms. Blauer stated that the focus on homeownership should be explicit and incentivized, especially in neighborhoods where DSCR funding is currently common.

Chair Day requested additional comments on the Action Plan. CAO Leach stated that there is an opportunity in the Transparency section to add additional considerations of accountability so that metrics and targets can be explicit. Chair Day stated his agreement with CAO Leach and requested any thoughts on particulars that could be added to the plan. CAO Leach suggested specific call outs for how progress is being evaluated. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the evaluation of the impact of the vacancy reduction work should start at the beginning of the process.

Closing

Chair Day adjourned the meeting.