

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Council (BVRC)

Minutes

November 18, 2025
Greater Baltimore Committee
11:00 am - 1:00 pm

The meeting recording can be found here: [November 18 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, Johns Hopkins University
- Mark Anthony Thomas, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Committee
- Jasmin Torres, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
- John Bullock, Councilman , Baltimore City Council
- Otis Roley, 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 October 14, 2025 meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the October 14, 2025 minutes were approved.

Monthly Production Report

Chair Day invited Vice Chair Kennedy to present the monthly production report. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the MOU between the City DHCD, the Maryland DHCD, and MSA had been approved.

Henry Waldron, staff, presented the monthly production report. Chair Day asked how long the change in VBN status when a property is sold takes to be reflected in the total VBN count. Mr. Waldron stated that the change is incorporated almost immediately. Ms. McMillan asked for clarity on the distinction between demolition targets and other strategies' goals. Mr. Waldron stated that projected demolitions are not intended to be seen as aspirational. Ms. McMillan asked whether the demolition target is related to a set of properties. Mr. Waldron stated that through Block Level Planning Baltimore City had identified properties that are targeted for demolition. Secretary Flora asked whether the identification of demolition targets is done with inspectors working in the field. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the community also participates in identifying demolition targets through the block-level planning process.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Mr. Waldron presented the failure to evict citations data, noting these \$1,000 citations encourage property owners to repair their property or allow the city to acquire it quicker and cheaper through the in rem process. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that the significant monthly increase in citations is due to a combination of factors, including staffing increases in code enforcement, targeted work within vacant reduction priority geographies, and a shift in strategy involving dedicated sanitation and code enforcement teams.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Mr. Waldron reported that completed acquisitions are on track and even exceeding the set goal, particularly for in rem acquisitions. Chair Day asked whether we should expect to see a large increase in acquisitions in the second half of FY26 due to the availability of FY25 and FY26 BVRI funds. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that acquisitions through negotiation would increase over the next six months, but those that must go through condemnation would extend into FY27.

Chair Day also stated that he expected in rem foreclosures to increase due to increases in court staffing. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the availability of the magistrate will also need to be increased. Ms. McMillan asked whether the new positions with the court had been filled. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that they had not. Ms. McMillan asked whether there was an expected date the new positions would be filled by. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the courts are in the hiring process. Chair Day stated that we could reach out to the courts for an update. Vice Chair Kennedy stated the courts are several months away from onboarding. Chair Day suggested that the formal update from the state courts could include an explanation of the organizational design of the courts.

Secretary Flora asked whether the goals represented on the dashboard will deviate as the "low-hanging fruit" is cleared out. Vice Chair Kennedy stated the process of updating goals and projections annually within the BVRC will help with expectation management. Chair Day stated

that the color-coding in the dashboard can help reflect to the public whether the various efforts are on track.

Vice Chair Kennedy noted that increases in costs over the lifetime of the vacant reduction effort will inevitably lead to changes in output projections. Mr. Mocksten noted that figures will need to be updated throughout the overall model due to increasing costs.

Mr. Waldron continued presenting the monthly production report. Ms. McMillan asked how quickly properties that are acquired by the City can be disposed of to CDOs. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that a variety of factors influence how quickly a property is disposed of, but that due to property consolidations, the acquisition figure will not equal the disposition figure. She also stated that dispositions will increase in the next few months due to the Request for Qualifications process and additional coordination with developers.

Chair Day asked whether the Council should expect to see an increase in dispositions in the remainder of FY26. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the increase in dispositions of vacant lots is most likely to be seen in FY27. Ms. McMillan asked for clarification on the timeline for disposition of vacant buildings and how to best dispose of properties quickly. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the RFQ process and the approval of quick disposition to BVRI CDOS is expected to increase the speed of disposition. Ms. McMillan asked whether the BVRI CDOs were included in the accelerated disposition process. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that CDOs in areas that were not included in the RFQ process in partnership with City DHCD would not have been included in an RFQ process previously, but would receive the same benefits now. Chair Day noted that the City, State, and BVRI CDOs are currently working through the process of identifying strategies for specific properties.

Mr. Waldron presented CodeMap. He stated that similar mapping is being used to assist the coordination between the City, State, and BVRI CDOs. Vice Chair Kennedy noted that many of the properties displayed as city-owned were acquired in the last year and others have been disposed to community developers.

CAO Leach asked if BVRI properties were represented on CodeMap. Mr. Waldron stated they are not on the public version. CAO Leach said that demonstrating how all funding sources were coming together in one neighborhood might be useful. Mr. Waldron noted that City DHCD had created an internal tool to help demonstrate alignment between CDO and City efforts. Chair Day stated that specific examples of communities could likely be shared at a future Council meeting. CAO Leach suggested that closed session could be used to review funding priorities. Chair Day confirmed that a closed session discussing timing, funding sources, property ownership, and strategy would be discussed at a future BVRC meeting. Ms. Blauer requested that several different neighborhoods be considered in the closed session.

Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative

Chair Day invited Kari Snyder, staff, and Ira Kowler, MCIC Chief Investment Officer, to present on the progress of the Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative.

Ms. Snyder presented an update of the BVRI disbursements to grantees. Mr. Gallagher asked when properties would be moved to MSA for demolition to begin. Ms. Snyder stated that a set of 156 properties have been approved for BVRI-funded demolition by MSA, and of those a subset of 74 were included on ENTPs or NTPS that were recently sent to MSA. Mr. Gallagher asked how many of the approved demolitions are tied to whole block outcomes. Ms. Snyder stated that all of the approved demolitions are aligned on the City's FY25 priority blocks. She stated that in a closed session, a map of all demolition locations could be presented. Mr. Gallagher stated that future lists of the properties that get bucketed to MSA should include timetables and projected future use to demonstrate how they tie into a whole blocks strategy.

Mr. Kowler presented an update of the MCIC disbursements to BVRI CDOs. Mr. Kowler reported that almost all 20 loan documents were executed and total disbursements reached over \$3.5 million out of the initial \$10 million allocation. Ms. McMillan asked what the turnaround process and timeline looks like for each draw from the CDOs. Mr. Kowler stated that the acquisition only disbursements can be quicker, but that construction draws do need additional review. He also stated that the recycling of loans will require a final calculation of total development costs, which requires additional time, though individual draws can happen fairly quickly.

Ms. McMillan asked whether CDO draws could only happen monthly. Mr. Kowler stated that the groups were guaranteed monthly access at a minimum, but that currently disbursements were happening far quicker. Chair Day asked why one CDO had yet to sign loan documents. Mr. Kowler stated that this hold up was due to additional legal review that the CDO has performed on their loan documents, but that MCIC has been in regular communication with that CDO.

Mr. Gallagher requested that future reporting to the BVRC include specific tracking of the 20 CDOs performance on a monthly basis to better determine where in the full delivery chain delays are occurring. Chair Day agreed and stated that such specific reporting broadly speaks to geography but wouldn't provide property level data. Mr. Gallagher stated that such reporting occurring monthly is reasonable to track progress. Mr. Gallagher stated that many BVRC members are interested in operationalizing BVRC meetings, so if there is a CDO that is stuck, the BVRC meetings could help them sort through their process.

Mr. Rolley asked to confirm that all the funds made available to the CDOs are through forgivable loans. Ms. Snyder confirmed that is the case. Mr. Rolley asked whether there are currently delays with the draw process. Mr. Kowler stated that no draw requests have been outstanding for more than 3 or 4 days.

CAO Leach asked whether payments from MCIC were on a reimbursement basis. Mr. Kowler stated that MCIC will approve draws based on construction contracts and other similar documentation. CAO Leach asked whether there have been issues receiving the required

documentation from CDOs. Mr. Kowler stated that there have been instances of requested documents needing further explanation, but that MCIC is more flexible with what it will accept than a traditional lender.

Ms. Snyder presented the FY26 CDOs property progress. CAO Leach stated that City DHCD can work to expedite that BVRI property list in their system. Ms. Snyder stated that the City's permitting data for BVRI properties would help with progress tracking. She also stated that dates for each facet of the property process were being tracked. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that information about site control of the Phase 1 BVRI CDO properties would be helpful. Ms. Snyder stated that approximately 150 of the properties in Phase 1 are under CDO site control.

Ms. Blauer asked whether properties that CDOs had targeted but were acquired by other entities are being tracked. Ms. Snyder stated that MD DHCD and MCIC are tracking withdrawals from the BVRI property list. Chair Day asked whether such withdrawals explained the reduction in total properties from the start of FY26. Ms. Snyder stated that this decrease was due to several CDOs more narrowly targeting their efforts. Ms. Blauer stated that the City should track if there are properties that are intended for BVRI organizations that are disposed elsewhere. Chair Day noted that with support of the Abell Foundation, MD DHCD will be bringing on a data analyst to support BVRI program reporting.

Ms. Snyder presented the progress of the BVRI funding to Baltimore City DHCD and MSA. Ms. Blauer asked whether the change in hazmat procurement will cause a delay with demolitions through MSA. Ms. Snyder stated that the change to an on-call hazmat remediation process has removed the need for hazmat procurement and therefore will speed up this process. She also noted that MSA still uses a regular procurement process for demolition contractors, but that discussions are ongoing about the volume of properties required to switch to an on-call demolition contractor.

Chair Day asked how long the hazmat remediation process generally takes. Vice Chair Kennedy stated the timeline depends on the property, but that it can be anywhere from a few days to several weeks. Mr. Gallagher asked whether the length of time required is partially dictated by the circumstances and the scope of the demolition. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the timeline of the hazmat work is often dependent on the circumstances.

Mr. Gallagher stated that all properties that will one day be demolished should be bucketed together in a list so a team at MSA could look at the most efficient order in which to demolish these properties. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that the neighborhoods with the most opportunity for demolition have recently been moved into the priority areas, so additional community planning work is needed to identify the remaining properties for demolition.

CAO Leach asked how the properties on the approved FY25/FY26 BVRI list were determined. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that these properties were determined through the block-level planning process. CAO Leach asked whether the 744 properties on the FY25/FY26 were all for demolition. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that demolition is a subset of the total list, but the

majority of the properties are acquisition targets. CAO Leach asked how many properties were slated for demolition. Ms. Snyder stated that 126 properties on the City's revised list are slated for demolition. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that additional demolitions are planned for FY27, and the total universe of properties identified for demolition is 307. Of the 307 submitted properties for demolition, Ms. Snyder stated that about 190 have been identified as ready to proceed, with approximately 120 of those ready within the next 12 months for FY25 and FY26 funding. The balance of the properties requires an estimated 24 to 36 months of due process or is tied to necessary acquisition and relocation activities before demolition can occur. Commission Kennedy clarified that city teams have been actively planning the demolition work with community organizations and elected officials in key neighborhoods to prepare for the numbers expected in FY27.

CAO Leach asked whether the 307 demolitions is enough for an on-call demolition contractor. Ms. Snyder stated that the uncertainty in timeframes for when the properties will be ready for demolition contributes to the inability for MSA to secure an on-call demolition contractor. Vice Chair Kennedy stated that some of the demolitions are delayed because they are contingent on City DHCD acquiring the property first. She also stated that the City Planning Department and DHCD have been actively working with communities where demolition is likely to occur.

Ms. McMillan asked whether stabilization has been added as an eligible strategy for BVRI funds. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed this and stated that stabilization actually serves as a subsidy for rehabilitation efforts and places a lien on a property, which may lead to in rem foreclosure. Ms. Torres asked to confirm that stabilization was occurring on privately owned vacant properties. Vice Chair Kennedy confirmed this.

Mr. Kowler provided an update on the BVRI Support Fund, noting that MCIC received \$1.8 million in requests, which exceeds available funds. Funding recommendations for the initial round have been made, and notifications will go out soon, with remaining money available on a rolling basis for emerging TA opportunities. Chair Day asked for a description of the types of services that the Support Fund could cover. Mr. Kowler noted that private acquisition support, construction finance management, and property sales were three examples of the diverse set of eligible uses for the Support Fund. Ms. Blauer asked whether there was a way to ensure that the expertise that the Support Fund pays for can benefit all of the CDOs. Ms. Snyder noted that the BVRI CDOs will be organized into a cohort that can allow for this sort of information sharing. Chair Day asked whether there was a good way to memorialize this guidance. Ms. Blauer noted such a guidebook type document would likely minimize the stress on the CDOs. Ms. Snyder confirmed that creating such a document would be possible. Chair Day confirmed that this could be undertaken.

Ira Kowler shared that they are moving toward a more flexible approach to funding, acknowledging the 20 CDOs have different strategies and needs. The process is transitioning to allow high-performing CDOs to access more funds through additional loans or waivers to established limits, such as the initial \$500,000 cap. Kari Snyder confirmed that this flexibility was

included in the program manual from the start, but was being implemented after initial disbursements to assess performance.

Chair Day highlighted that the increased demand for activity from participants has necessitated flexibility, suggesting that future funding rounds might change parameters to acknowledge the greater capacity of some CDOs. Ms. Blauer asked if drawing down more funds is possible for properties that are contiguous or part of a whole block strategy, leveraging economies of scale. Ira Kowler affirmed this is possible.

Ms. Snyder reported that the approval process for adding new properties to the approved list occurs within 24 to 48 hours, if they are VBNs on agreed-upon blocks, but takes longer if the property status needs further investigation. She also stated a forthcoming homeownership incentive and a special mortgage program with a reduced interest rate will help drive demand for purchasing BVRI-funded homes. Ms. Snyder explained that the down payment assistance is structured as a five-year forgivable loan, with repayment required if the property is resold or refinanced within that term.

Vice Chair Kennedy provided an update on the New York investor situation, noting that Mayor Scott announced an investigation into fair housing violations by the investors on the properties. Of the 706 identified properties, none are currently in rem eligible, and the average lien is about \$6,500. She reported that about half of the 706 properties are in foreclosure.

Vice Chair Kennedy announced that the city, along with Chair Day and the state, will co-convene a working group focused on mitigating negative impacts on tenants in the affected properties. The working group will include various city and state agencies, including the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services and the Sheriff's Office, DHCD's Division of Homeless Solutions, and will convene after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Reinvest Baltimore Action Plan

Chair Day acknowledged the extensive feedback on the first draft of the action plan, which is slated for adoption by the BVRC in December. The plan is intended to operationalize strategies for coordination and deconfliction among city, state, philanthropic, and private sector activities. The plan will be a living document, updated annually, and will include appendices such as an implementation matrix and a sources and uses mapping of funding.

Chair Day summarized key themes from the feedback, including a need for greater emphasis on neighborhood-level outcomes, more focus on private sector strategies and leverage, and attention to non-displacement and affordability strategies. A major theme emphasized by Ms. McMillian was the need to reflect "community-driven" or "community-led" values rather than the softer term "community input". Chair Day agreed that the language needs to be clearer about values and distinguish between the council's coordinating role and the work of individual partners. Chair Day emphasized that they need to hear from all critical stakeholders before distributing the revised draft, and that conflicting opinions may need discussion.

Ms. Blauer stated that the Data Working Group will work on compiling and determining historical data, baseline data, and numerical targets for the outcomes in the action plan, which Chair Day affirmed as important.

Chair Day asked Mr. Gallagher to provide an update on the Delivery Chain Working Group. Mr. Gallagher stated that much of the group's work, including discussions on whole block strategy and disposition timelines, would be aired at a City Council hearing later that evening. He also recalled the group's recent focus on attorney workloads, staffing levels, property prioritization, and exploring mail service options to accelerate the in rem process.

Ms. McMillan provided an update on the Finance Working Group that has focused on understanding the \$3 billion plan and exploring financial instruments like a small pilot for interest buy-down to facilitate homeownership. They are planning a detailed discussion on how BVRI money and TIFs can work together to make better use of funds. An active Request for Information (RFI) is underway for the private sector fund.

Closing

Chair Day noted that the next BVRC meeting will be December 16. Chair Day adjourned the meeting.