

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. As the Chair of the 4B Commission, I am here to represent all of the 4B Commissioners as we ask for your help to address vacant/blighted property enforcement. In our opinion, at the heart of the issue is an inconsistency in objectives. While the city focuses on the lost revenue associated with vacant and blighted properties, ANC Commissioners and residents are focused on the related quality of life concerns associated with these properties. They often become rat infested, dumping grounds, and they create additional concerns for other agencies; these vacant/blighted properties also become embarrassing visual reminders of ineffective programming that is not helping address the original issue and is not resolving the concerns of DC Residents.

It is the policy/goal of the District government to put vacant property back into use. One of the available tools is a vacant property tax. While homeowners pay 85 cents per \$100 valuation, the owner of a vacant property pays \$5. Not only does the higher rate help cover city costs associated with the nuisance property but in theory, this creates an economic incentive for the owner to put the property back into use. But as we have learned, in some cases, DCRA is not collecting this money, which then begs the question, is this an economic incentive? In many cases, DCRA is not doing anything about the property until they are notified/pushed. So, the City is charging additional tax dollars, but the vacant properties are not being maintained or secured. It is not hard to find examples throughout the 4B Commission.

Specifically, while there are a plethora of vacant properties, it is difficult to get a property classified as vacant. In one example, in 4B02, there is a house that was unoccupied for over a decade, the owner passed away a few years ago; and property is maintained at bare minimum level. Even though no one has lived there in a decade, DCRA did not deem it vacant. Thankfully, due to resident pressure, the current owner has agreed to sell the property.

For properties that are deemed vacant, the properties continue to deteriorate, sidewalks are blocked by overgrown shrubs, and we must make multiple reports to DCRA before they will address the issue.

There often are times when requests to DCRA are closed out without any apparent action and no follow up with the ANC Commissioners. While Donald Sullivan, Program Manager for the Vacant Building Program is very responsive, he cannot support an entire Commission, Ward, or City without a team of people to support him.

We need to find ways to encourage property owners to rehabilitate and/or occupy their vacant abandoned and deteriorated residential property, which ultimately stabilizes neighborhoods by decreasing the number of vacant and abandoned residential properties and potentially eliminate or transforming vacant and/or abandoned eyesores into engaged, occupied homes.

Here are a few examples:

4B02 - 6700 6th Street, NW, is a vacant property that has been cited and fined several times, but other than the bare minimum of mowing the grass when cited by DCRA, the owner has taken no steps to maintain the property.

4B05 – Dumping on Lot 69 at the intersection 8th Street NW/Longfellow Street NW & 9th Street NW/ Madison Street NW. Because the gate is not maintained or locked, people often dump hazardous material and refuse.

4B06 - 205 Nicholson Street NW is a vacant and blighted property that has already been cited and fined, will be fined again per DCRA, but the owner has not made any improvements to the property.

4B08 - 6109 3rd Street NE is a vacant home that at one point had no roof and was collecting rainwater, which became a breeding ground for mosquitoes. For more than a year, I worked with DCRA to request that the house be deemed a blighted property. I was left with the impression that the property would be razed because it was an eyesore. The property remains unattended and unaddressed by both DCRA and the owner after being blighted SINCE January 2020.

119 Missouri Avenue NE – residents moved into a condemned building removing the DCRA condemnation sticker on the door.

119 Kennedy Street NE is a vacant building and is on everyone's radar because people dump furniture, garbage etc. in and around the property. It becomes a breeding ground for rats which we are trying to reduce.

5612 1st St NW is owned by a developer who used the property as their personnel dumping station. Fines were issued by DCRA, DPW and DOH. The quality of life for the neighbors was significantly impacted and while DCRA fined the owner, DCRA did not clean the property or ensure that the owner cleaned it either. We had to become a thorn in everyone's side for a year or more before the property was moderately cleaned. The rat infestation was so bad, there was a distinct odor and eventually, the rats ate the wiring underneath the neighbor's car rendering it undrivable. It also is a breeding ground for rats which we are trying to reduce.

4B09 – 5732 5th Street NE has abandoned trucks, vehicles, motorcycles, trash debris, gaping holes, a broken lock off the door and is affecting adjoining properties (5728 5th St NE & 5734.

5506 4th Street NE is a vacant lot with snakes, raccoons, and other wildlife. A DOH worker fell when trying to inspect the lot. Small children live next door. We would like to fence off the lot which requires DCRA to engage and address the issues.