

Property Revitalization Committee (“PRC”) Summary, Conclusion & Recommendations

April 2, 2018

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BACKGROUND

During the 60th Administration, Mayor McClement established the Blighted and Vacant Property Committee (“BVPC”) to evaluate the current status of and policies regarding vacant and blighted commercial and residential properties in the City, and to recommend policy initiatives to encourage/require reasonable maintenance, reinvestment, and occupancy of such properties. The work of the BVPC was determined to be complete when it presented the final phase of its report to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen at the December 5, 2012 Workshop. In 2015, Mayor McClement reinstated the BVPC to review the progress made by the City and to assess the need for an ongoing standing committee. The recommendations of the BVPC were presented to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen at the July 20, 2016 Workshop.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Property Revitalization Committee (“PRC”) is to pick up where the BVPC ended and provide an inclusive, long-term focus on the issues of vacant and underutilized properties and those with significant or reoccurring outstanding code violations. This may include providing policy advice to the Board of Aldermen and recommendations to the Mayor regarding best practices for addressing problem properties and strategies for encouraging/requiring reasonable maintenance, reinvestment, and occupancy of underutilized and vacant properties. The PRC will be a recommending body only.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the PRC are set forth below:

Short Term

- Identify metrics for monitoring the progress of the City’s revitalization of underutilized and vacant properties.
- Work with staff to determine hurdles to gaining compliance with problem properties and offer suggestions for new approaches.
- Assist in the creation of a list of condemned properties within the City.
- Develop a beautification program for the City that includes opportunities for garden clubs or corporate sponsors.
- Identify all City entry corridors and rank in order of priority for improvement.
- Present recommendations for entry signage and improvements along entry corridors, working in coordination with the City’s Wayfinding Committee.
- Create definitions for “Long-Term Vacant” and “Chronically Underutilized” properties and criteria to address these types of properties with legislation.

- Develop curriculum for annual training about City Codes, Departments, and processes to be presented by City staff to HOA boards, property management companies, NAC coordinators, and the public.
- Establish an awards process for annual recognition of exemplary renovations (categories/application - process/review criteria).

Long Term

- Analyze the City's progress annually regarding policies and best practices to help properties achieve their best potential.
- Recommend properties to be added to the Blighted Properties List or Watch List.
- Review quarterly the list of condemned properties within the City and make recommendations for strategies to gain compliance from these properties.
- Coordinate annual awards for exemplary renovations.

COMPOSITION AND TERMS

For the first year, the PRC will be established as an ad-hoc committee of the Mayor. At the end of one year, the PRC will present to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen its recommendation to either continue as an ad-hoc committee for a short period of time in order to complete its goals or become a permanent standing committee.

Summary: The PRC held its first meeting on April 10, 2017 and held its final meeting on April 2, 2018. The PRC broke up into 3 subgroups: (1) Metrics/Hurdles (2) Beautification (3) Awards. The conclusions and recommendations from each sub-committee as well as the entire PRC are outlined below.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

- (1) Metrics/Hurdles reviewed the Land Use Council recommendations (compiled over the last several years between Land Use Council members and City Staff) as well as the Downtown Partnership's April 28, 2017 presentation re: City of Frederick project application/review processes. In addition, the PRC discussed creating a survey to solicit feedback from the City's staff to determine if any redundancies exist that could be streamlined or amended to improve efficiencies and customer service. While this task was not completed, it is recommended and should be administered by each Department head. The subcommittee recommends that the City move forward with all of the recommendations from the Land Use Council and to further review and implement measures to reduce the redundancies and timelines from the study presented by the Downtown Partnership, both **attached** hereto.
- (2) Beautification subcommittee identified and prioritized the City's gateways and determined that the East Street Roundabout should be addressed immediately. See **attached** list for summary of identified and prioritized sites for consideration for beautification projects.
- (3) Awards subcommittee reviewed opportunities for continuing education seminars and forums, see **attached** summary for recommendations for continuing education and awards program.

- The PRC reviewed the recently adopted Vacant Property Ordinance adopted by the City of Brunswick (as well as discussed definitions for “Long-Term Vacant” and “Chronically Underutilized” properties) and determined that it was not a good model for the City of Frederick.
- The PRC reviewed and discussed the need for the City of Frederick disclosure form used with the transfer of Real Estate to be updated and expanded to include explicit representations re: the maintenance and upkeep of properties as required by the Frederick City Code including the International Property Maintenance Code (“IPMC”) the Land Management Code (“LMC”) (the City’s zoning ordinance) and in addition, that the City should consider including in the water/sewer bills similar notifications to property owner’s regarding the expectations of maintaining their properties in compliance with the minimum standards outlined in the Frederick City Code, IPMC, and LMC.
- The PRC also reviewed City Code, Chapter 12.5, Article II (Receivership) and concluded that City leadership should seriously consider this tool for any properties persistently in violation of City codes and regulations, whereby those properties are in essence in a continuous state of being “Blighted.” The PRC recommends that the Mayor and Board place the highest level of discretion upon the use of the Receivership and only consider the use of it as a “last resort” after all other considerations have been exhausted.
- For example, given the history of certain properties in the City showing consistent disregard for the City’s PMC, LC and LMC (and other applicable City codes/ordinances), and/or the apparent inability to promote and maintain the use and occupancy, the PRC found the following properties to be prime candidates for the City to explore pursuing its rights under Receivership:
 1. 123-125 N. Market Street, the “Asiana Building”
 2. 300 N. Market Street, formerly “That Cuban Place”

The PRC also concluded that there is no need for a standing committee. That said, the PRC welcomes the opportunity to present and discuss its recommendations outlined in this document at a workshop with the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, if requested.

Finally, the PRC felt that the Code Enforcement department does an outstanding job (perhaps somewhat underrated) and more emphasis should be placed upon marketing and communicating the efforts of the Code Enforcement department to ensure that the community is aware of the resources, efforts and outcomes from their work.

Respectfully submitted,

The Property Revitalization Committee