



Government of the District of Columbia
Advisory Neighborhood Commission
Box 75115
Washington DC 20013



May 17, 2010

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 110
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Jack Evans
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 106
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmember Bowser and Councilmember Evans:

As you know, ANC 6A has worked hard over the past 3 years to identify and mitigate vacant property in our neighborhood and we believe that even when vacant properties are not “blighted,” they are a burden our community, because when homes are unoccupied and poorly maintained, they tend to become eyesores that attract vermin, litter, and criminal activity. For these reasons, we applauded your recent proposal to restore a distinct tax class for vacant properties that provides owners a strong financial incentive to reoccupy or sell their property and submitted our own legislative proposal regarding vacant and blighted properties to you for your consideration. We believe that a restored vacant property tax rate with few, if any, exemptions should be enacted as soon as possible.

Our ANC recently added language to our legislative proposal to reform the vacant property laws to include an improved statutory definition for “blighted.” We believe our proposal largely mirrors the proposed expanded definition of “blighted” within Councilmember Bowser’s bill 18-546. In particular, we believe that any property which has been deemed “uninhabitable” should be considered “blighted.” We also believe that the section of the code that defines “blighted” should be modified to make the consideration of the listed factors mandatory, rather than permissive, and should therefore also include a catch-all provision to allow for other properties, which are clearly blighted that may not fall within the delineated factors to be so classified.

We urge you and the full Council to consider a vacant property tax system that eliminates all exemptions except for military personnel who are on temporary reassignment and instead features an escalating tax rate based on the number of years a property is vacant. We also encourage you to amend the definition of “blighted” to allow for more accurate classification of the many properties that are widely recognized as such, but which have not been so classified due to the overly restrictive and permissive language under current law.

Letter to Council Members Bowser and Evans

Page 2

We hope you agree and will consider our proposal as you continue to reform the Vacant Property System.

On behalf of the Commission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelvin J. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelvin J. Robinson

Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

cc: Tommy Wells, Councilmember, Ward 6
Members, District of Columbia Council
Linda Argo, Director, DCRA
Reuben Pemberton, Director Vacant Property, DCRA