



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



May 17, 2010

Ms. Linda Argo
Director
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
941 North Capitol St. NE, Room 9500
Washington, DC 20002

Mr. Bryan Syvak
Chief Technology Officer
Government of the District of Columbia
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW
Suite 930S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Argo and Mr. Syvak:

ANC 6A has worked hard to address vacant and blighted property issues over the past several years. Our Economic Development and Zoning Committee and citizen volunteers regularly assist DCRA with identifying and abating vacant properties in our neighborhoods. ANC 6A is currently in the process of completely updating our vacant and blighted property map and will be transmitting that information to DCRA in the coming months.

Based on our experience, we believe that DCRA must adopt procedures to enhance the transparency of the administrative system for identifying and managing vacant properties. In particular, we request that DCRA make real-time updates to its vacant and blighted property lists available online. We also request that as part of these lists, DCRA identify what, if any, exemptions have been granted to vacant properties and identify which vacant properties have been deemed “blighted.” Furthermore, we encourage DCRA to provide notification to the local ANCs when the vacant or blighted status of a property has changed.

We believe that improved transparency will greatly assist the community and DCRA alike in its efforts to accurately catalogue which properties are vacant/blighted and which ones are properly categorized as inhabited. The lack of publicly accessible information currently greatly inhibits the community’s ability to assist DCRA with obtaining the most accurate information possible and frequently leads to calls and emails to DCRA to obtain basic information, which increases the administrative burden on the understaffed Office of Vacant Property.

Finally, we request that technological incompatibilities that appear to hinder communication between DCRA and OTR be removed to allow for timely and accurate updates to the tax categorization of vacant and blighted properties. It is our understanding that when DCRA makes changes to a property's categorization as vacant/blighted, those changes must be manually submitted to OTR prior to changes being made to a property's tax categorization. This poses a significant burden to the efficient administration of the incentives embodied within the enhanced tax class category and leads to improper categorization of properties with each tax season. These technological barriers hinder the application of the Class 3 tax rate to properly identified vacant or blighted properties and should be removed.

Please have your staff follow up with Phil Toomajian, who is a member of the ANC 6A Economic Development and Zoning Committee. Mr Toomajian can be reached at ptoomajian@gmail.com or (202) 532-4301.

On Behalf of the Commission,

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

Kelvin J. Robinson
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

cc: Tommy Wells, Councilmember, Ward 6
Muriel Bowser, Chair, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs
Tom Madison, Capitol Hill North Community Association