



# CITY OF HARTFORD

## DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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### Memorandum

Date: February 8, 2017  
To: Mayor Luke Bronin  
From: Laura Settlemyer, Director of Blight Remediation  
Cc: Sean Fitzpatrick, Director of Development Services  
Kiley Gosselin, Deputy Director of Development Services  
Re: Anti-Blight Ordinance Revisions – Executive Summary

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#### **(1) Blighted Vacant Housing Special Assessment**

- Repeals the Blighted Vacant Housing Special Assessment.
- Keeps the Blighted Housing Review Committee (renamed Blight Review Action Committee), the group that administered the Special Assessment, as an oversight body that is responsible for reporting to City Council on blight remediation efforts bi-annually and that has the authority to settle any anti-blight citations, fines, or liens.
- The following officers/directors, their deputies, or their designees, will be members of the Blight Review Action Committee: (1) Tax Assessor, (2) Tax Collector, (3) Corporation Counsel, (4) Director of Department of Public Works, (5) Director of Health and Human Services, (6) Director of Licenses and Inspections, and (7) Director of Blight Remediation. The Chief Operating Officer and the Finance Director will no longer be members.

#### **(2) Anti-Blight & Property Maintenance Program**

- Strengthens the City's existing process for enforcing anti-blight violations and liens:
  - To encourage more property owners to bring their properties into compliance;
  - To allow the City to collect more revenue from fines and liens to offset the cost of blight on the Hartford community; and
  - To enable the City to abate the nuisance or force a transfer of ownership (through lien foreclosure or voluntary sale) when property owners do not comply.
- This will be known as the City's "Anti-Blight and Property Maintenance Program." The new program will follow the "Fix It Up, Pay It Up, or Give It Up" model of strategic code enforcement used in other cities across the country to fight blight.

- Exemptions:
  - Occupied properties will be exempt from the fines and liens imposed by the program for the first year, or until March 31, 2018.
  - Properties undergoing renovation under a current building permit.
- Establishes the Division of Blight Remediation and the Director of Blight Remediation within the Department of Development Services to enforce the City's new "Anti-Blight and Property Maintenance Program." The Director of Blight Remediation may establish rules, regulations, and policies for enforcement of the program. Those rules and policies will be subject to review and approval by the Blight Review Action Committee.
- Creates a set of minimum property maintenance standards to educate property owners. Two or more violations of the minimum property maintenance standards will constitute an anti-blight violation. Two or more anti-blight violations may trigger fines and liens.
- Increases the number of potential anti-blight violations from 12 to 34. The increased number of violations is consistent with ordinances in New Haven and New Orleans. Part of the increased number is the result of unpacking some of the previous violations into separate, individual violations. Examples of new violations that did not exist under the previous ordinance:
  - Boarded windows and doors. Property owners will not be allowed to keep properties boarded for more than 1 year.
  - Trash accumulation.
  - Weeds and grass over 12 inches high.
  - Inoperable appliances, machinery, and cars being kept on property.
- Shortens the time period between notice of violation and issuance of a citation from 30 to 10 days. This shortened time period is consistent with the ordinance in New Haven.
- Creates an opportunity for property owners to request and receive a 30-day extension of time from the Division of Blight Remediation to correct violations. If property owners need more time to comply, they can request additional time from the Blight Review Action Committee in 60-day increments. This is similar to the procedure in New Haven.
- Keeps the existing fine amount at \$100 per violation per day. This amount is restricted by state law.
- Keeps the City's existing appeals process for anti-blight violations.
- Keeps the City's ability to place a priority lien on a property and enforce that lien through foreclosure when blight goes un-remediated and fines go unpaid.