

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON,
LOUIJEUNE, BOK, BREADON, MEJIA, ARROYO, BAKER, COLETTA,
FLAHERTY, MURPHY AND FLYNN



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS REINFORCING FINES OR IMPLEMENTING FUNDING FOR DISTRESSED PRIVATELY OWNED BUILDINGS AND VACANT LOTS

- WHEREAS,** Roxbury is burdened with one of the highest rates of distressed residential buildings and vacant developable land in the city of Boston, which significantly depletes the region's property values, dampens neighborhood vitality, perpetuates higher rates of crime (particularly arson), decreases walkability, and overall lowers the neighborhood's ability to sustainably grow; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Nearly two thirds of deteriorating properties within Boston remained untouched for five to fifteen years -- during which other social and environmental issues, whose solutions are often linked to the availability of repurposeful parcels, are able to fester; *and*
- WHEREAS,** A neglected yet privately-owned building within the neighboring Dorchester area was twice burned by devastating city fires, demonstrating both the safety risk unmaintained buildings pose to local residents, and costs accumulated by the city for their upkeep; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Diminished trust between Roxbury residents and city officials, and lack of public knowledge on building citation protocols, leaves dilapidated buildings unchecked by city departments; This demonstrates a need for the city to expand awareness and urgently address deteriorating properties within underserved neighborhoods; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Unproductive "land banking" practices, in which property owners hold vacant parcels of land for years while they await greater investment opportunity, counters decades long pleas from Roxbury residents for the replenishment of green community spaces in their neighborhoods; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The city of Baltimore passed an ordinance that raises fines for neglected, privately-owned buildings, discouraging the perception of city fees as a "cost of doing business" for property owners and urging them to act on their land ownership in order to combat high crime rates and blight; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Nearly a tenth of distressed buildings within Boston owe taxes totalling over \$167,993; *and*

WHEREAS, The city of Boston is responsible for protecting the health and safety of its residents; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to explore ways to address repairing vacant, trashed, or otherwise neglected lots and dilapidated buildings to property owners that are able to afford it without burden. To collaborate with the appropriate City Department to explore programs in place or the need of implementation of a program to portion newly implemented fees funding community focused grants and sustain identified private parcels thereafter in order to support Residents in undoing the results of long-term disinvestment in their neighborhood and address issues at the intersection of insufficient land use.

Filed on: May 18, 2022