



# ARE YOU BUYING A REHABBED HOME IN BALTIMORE CITY?

**BE SURE THE PROPERTY DOES NOT HAVE A VACANT BUILDING NOTICE**

## BACKGROUND

Anyone purchasing rehabbed properties in Baltimore City should ask one simple question before signing anything: **“Does the house have a Vacant Building Notice?”**

Some new homeowners are discovering their rehabilitated home has a Vacant Building Notice (VBN). A VBN is a code violation placed on a property when it is vacant, abandoned, and uninhabitable. The VBN lists the requirements needed to rehab the property and bring the property up to code to remove the VBN. The VBN remains on the property until the violation is corrected and any fines paid.

## ISSUE

Some developers are rehabbing homes, even to beautiful conditions, and then placing those homes on the market for sale without abating the existing VBN. New homeowners are purchasing what looks like fully rehabbed properties that still have a VBN. The new homeowners can then get violation notices and citations for matters they were unaware of and may even think it was just a mistake. Unaddressed violations and citations could cause a property to end up in tax sale or cause the new owner to face other issues with the home if it is not up to code.

Anyone rehabbing a property must obtain proper building permits from the City’s Permits office and a final Use and Occupancy Permit certifying that the property is habitable and up to code to get the VBN removed. We are noticing an increase in contractors and owners not getting the VBN removed before the sale. There may not have been an understanding that permits were needed, or the contractor is cutting corners and not following permitting procedures.

## RESOLUTION

To resolve this issue, in 2021, the Baltimore City Council passed Council Bill 21-0078, requiring sellers to disclose that a property has a Vacant Building Notice (VBN) on the property on the contract of sale. There are fines and penalties for failure to disclose this information. Also, purchasers can walk away from the contract if the house has a VBN that the seller still needs to abate.

The City is working to educate title companies on checking for violations and reading lien sheets. We are also asking purchasers and their realtors to be aware, research, and ask, "Does this home have a Vacant Building Notice?" Here are two ways you can find out if a property still has a vacant building notice:

**A. CoDeMap** - Enter the property address on the City's CoDeMap website here:

<https://cels.baltimorehousing.org/codemapv2ext/>.

The red squares/diamonds mean a home has a vacant building notice. Users can click on the property to learn more about the owner, the violation notice, and more. A simple search on this website will be helpful before even considering the purchase.



**B. Lien Sheet** - A lien sheet is provided to the Title Company before settlement to ensure that all liens, citations, and violations have been extinguished. Title companies need to read the lien sheet more closely, and residents should only settle on a property once they see the lien sheets. Below is an example of a lien sheet with a violation notice listed.

