



Project C.O.R.E.: Demolition FAQ

Q: What is Project C.O.R.E.?

A: In January 2016, Governor Larry Hogan and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake announced a four-year partnership between the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, the Maryland Stadium Authority, and the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development to demolish thousands of vacant buildings to serve as the catalyst for redevelopment, reinvestment, and stabilization in Baltimore. Project Creating Opportunities for Renewal and Enterprise – or Project C.O.R.E. – is the name of this initiative.

Under Project C.O.R.E., the State has committed to invest \$75 million and the City has committed to contribute \$18.5 million to demolish as many blighted properties as possible over four years, focusing on half- and whole-blocks of blight in order to maximize neighborhood impact. This program will also fund the stabilization of selected properties for future rehabilitation and redevelopment. Additionally, the State has committed to leverage an estimated \$600 million through existing programs to encourage new investment in challenged communities. To learn more about Project C.O.R.E., please go to the [initiative's main web page](#).

Q: Why demolition?

A: Every current and future resident of Baltimore should live in a safe and stable neighborhood. The removal of vacant and abandoned buildings is a critical tool that helps the City to eliminate blight in order to stabilize housing values, enhance public safety, create green space, and promote new investment.

Population loss and other economic factors over the past 60 years have left Baltimore with upwards of

17,000 vacant and abandoned structures. Based on location, population trends, and market demand, about 5,500 of the vacants have good potential for redevelopment. Market demand for the remaining 11,500, however, is very limited. These properties are candidates for demolition.

Project C.O.R.E. builds upon Baltimore City's already successful **Vacants to Value program**, which has funded the strategic demolition of over 1,700 buildings since its inception in 2010.

Q: Will Project C.O.R.E. use deconstruction practices?

A: Through Vacants to Value, the City pioneered a deconstruction as demolition program. With deconstruction, our demolition dollars do double duty: combat blight and create jobs. Under the 18-month pilot program, the City deconstructed 123 houses, salvaging more than 500,000 bricks, almost 30,000 square feet of hardwood floors, and more than 100,000 board feet of lumber, and creating 30 full-time equivalent jobs for Baltimore residents. Project C.O.R.E. plans to incorporate similar deconstruction and workforce development programs.

Q: What is a vacant building?

A: According to Baltimore City's Building, Fire, and Related Codes, a "vacant building" is one that is unoccupied and unsafe or unfit for human habitation or other use. A common misperception is that every unoccupied building is a "vacant building." An unoccupied property, properly maintained, is not a code violation. An unoccupied property meeting the following criteria qualifies as a "vacant" building and warrants a violation notice: open to casual entry; boarded windows or doors; or lacks intact windows sashes, walls, or roof surfaces to repel weather entry.

When a vacant building violation notice is issued, the owner is required to clean and secure the building and to maintain the building in a clean and secure state at all times, until the building is either rehabilitated or demolished. Should the private owner fail to timely comply with the violation notice the City has the authority to take action to clean and secure, stabilize, or demolish the property.

In short, a vacant building notice allows the City to take action on a privately-owned vacant property. The City owns only about 20% of the properties demolished in the City. The others are privately-owned and will continue to be privately-owned after the demolition, at which time the City places a lien on the property for the cost of demolition.

Q: Why does the City target whole blocks of properties?

A: Baltimore City is a rowhouse town. Since most buildings on a block are physically connected, it is most economically efficient and impactful to target entire blocks. In neighborhoods with significant blight, whole block demolition can eliminate a major health and safety risk, and create a pathway towards creating large green spaces for community use that are also more attractive for potential redevelopment.

Q: How are demolition and stabilization candidates identified?

A: We prioritize demolitions that accomplish at least one of several goals: support investment, stabilize areas of moderate or high homeownership, minimize relocation, promote public safety, address community requests, and create opportunities for green space and other reuse. We also prioritize demolition where the least amount of relocation will be necessary. The available stabilization funding will help stabilize intact historic properties in anticipation of future rehabilitation.

Properties are identified by examining data and gathering input from community members, City agencies, and other stakeholders. Input from community members is gathered through community meetings, outreach efforts, master plans, and online tools. Agency input is gathered from local and State agencies, historic preservation partners, and other stakeholders.

Under Project C.O.R.E., new demolition or stabilization candidates will be identified each fiscal year. For the upcoming year, which begins in July, community and agency meetings will be held throughout the summer of 2016, with selections finalized by the fall of 2016. Subsequent years will follow a similar schedule.

Q: How long does the demolition process take?

A: Once demolition begins, it usually takes about two months for the structures to be fully demolished, the debris removed, and the site graded and seeded, depending on the size of the block targeted.

Prior to demolition the City goes through a rigorous process of resolving and identifying the property ownership, tax status, and other impediments allowing for the removal or stabilization of all properties impacted by Project C.O.R.E. The steps vary based on the conditions of the block. Steps may include property acquisition, resident relocation, due process for owners of vacant properties, and administrative hearings. Given these variables, not all selected properties will make it through the process to be demolished. This pre-demolition process can take up to two years.

While you may not see visible activity on a block, **all selected properties currently on the map** are at some point in the demolition process, and we are working to get them demolished as quickly as possible.

Q: I live next to a block targeted for demolition, what precautions are taken to minimize the demolitions' impact on me?

Baltimore City's number one priority is public safety. Should you ever have any concerns about a demolition site, please report the issue to 311.

All demolition contractors, whether City-contracted or privately-contracted, must follow the demolition rules set forth in the **Baltimore City Building, Fire, and Related Codes**. The Code includes the following

types of regulations to ensure public safety: use of hoses to keep demolition site wet in order to reduce dust; rat extermination before demolition begins; cut off of gas, electric, and water utilities before demolition begins; and posting signs to inform the community of upcoming demolition at least five days before the work begins.

Additionally, each building demolished through Vacants to Value or Project C.O.R.E. is tested for asbestos before the demolition process begins. If asbestos is found, the asbestos is removed in a safe manner before releasing the property to the demolition contractors.

Q: What if I own a property targeted for demolition?

A: If you own a property targeted for demolition, you will be contacted by the City to discuss your options moving forward. Should you have any questions, please contact us at either the information provided in the letter mailed to you or at demolition@baltimorecity.gov. If you occupy a property on a block targeted for demolition, you will be contacted by one of the City's Relocation Specialists who will work with you to find replacement housing in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Act.

Q: What happens after blocks are demolished?

A: After demolition of the houses is completed, the contractor will remove all debris and rubble, spread topsoil and compost, and seed the site with a slow growing grass seed mix. We expect the majority of the post-demolition sites to remain in this "Clean and Green" condition in the near term, with City crews responsible for their basic maintenance. Where appropriate, a portion of the sites will be converted into community green spaces, with input from the surrounding neighborhood.

When a site is selected for demolition, before the demolition begins, the Baltimore City Office of Sustainability works with the Baltimore City Department of Planning, Baltimore Housing, and community residents to evaluate whether the site is appropriate for redevelopment or for potential use as a community green space. The **Growing Green Initiative** (GGI) is a City led effort coordinated by the Office of Sustainability to develop unique **greening strategies** for vacant lots. The Growing Green Initiative has several tools to improve sites that are being maintained as "Clean and Green," including fencing the site or planting trees. If a site has been identified as a mid- or long-term green space, the Office of Sustainability works with the surrounding neighborhood to determine other potential, appropriate greening strategies, depending on the ownership of the lots.

Neighborhood residents or community groups who are interested in enhancing and maintaining a demolished site for community open space are encouraged to contact GGI staff at 410-396-5902.

Q: How can I recommend a property/group of properties for demolition?

A: To recommend a property for demolition, **please use the following mapping tool**. You can also email City staff at demolition@baltimorecity.gov with any suggestions. We will use the information gathered from these input methods during our annual agency meetings to identify and prioritize blocks for demolition.

Additionally, Project C.O.R.E. will be hosting a series of community meetings to gather input on demolition targets. Please stay tuned to the Project C.O.R.E. main page for more details.

If there is a property that you believe to be an immediate danger to the public, **please report it to 311** as soon as possible.

Q: I'm a contractor, can I bid on demolition jobs?

A: The Maryland Stadium Authority will be managing the environmental testing, deconstruction, and demolition for Project C.O.R.E. If you are interested in learning more about the bid process, **please see their website.**