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>> GOOD AFTERNOON.  
FOR THE RECORD MY NAME IS ED  
FLYNN, CITY COUNCILOR I'M CHAIR  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON CITY  
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND  
MILITARY VETERANS AFFAIRS.  
I AM JOINED WITH MY COLLEAGUES,  
CITY COUNCILOR ANDREA CAMPBELL,  
CITY COUNCILOR KIM JANEY.  
THIS PUBLIC HEARING IS BEING  
RECORDED AND WILL BE BROADCAST  
ON COMCAST 8, RCN 82, VERY  
ADVISE ON 1964 AND ONLINE.  
AT THIS TIME PLEASE SILENCE YOUR  
CELL PHONES AND OTHER DEVICES.  
WE WILL ALSO TAKE PUBLIC  
TESTIMONY AND WOULD APPRECIATE  
IT IF YOU WOULD SIGN IN AND  
CHECK OFF THE BOX TO TESTIFY.  
PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND  
AFFILIATION, RESIDENCE, LIMIT  
YOUR COMMENTS TO A FEW MINUTES  
TO ENSURE THAT ALL COMMENTS AND  
CONCERNS CAN BE HEARD.  
TODAY'S HEARING IS ON DOCKET  
0536 RECORD FOR HEARING  
REGARDING VACANT PROPERTIES IN  
THE CITY OF BOSTON.  
THIS IS AN IMPORTANT HEARING  
TODAY I'D LIKE TO THANK CITY  
COUNCILORS O'MALLEY, CITY  
COUNCILOR CAMPBELL.  
THE CURRENT REAL ESTATE MARKET  
HAS LEFT RESIDENCES AND  
BUSINESSES FACING HIGHER RENTS  
AND DISPLACED COMMUNITIES AT  
TIMES.  
THIS HEARING IS TO DISCUSS THE  
RECENT ISSUES REGARDING HIGH END  
BLIGHT IN LUXURY UNITS PURCHASED  
FOR INVESTMENTS THAT ARE LEFT  
THE EMPTY.  
OUR CITY HAS A HOUSING CRISIS IN  
LUXURY UNITS LEFT EMPTY ONLY TO  
MAKE THIS PROBLEM WORSE.  
MANY OF THESE LUXURY CONDOS AND  
APARTMENTS ARE NOT OWNED BUT ARE  
STORAGE UNITS.

IN ADDITION, HAS SHOWN THAT MORE HOUSING UNITS IN BOSTON ARE BEING HELD FOR SEASONAL OR OCCASIONAL USE.

I'M PROUD TO JOIN MY FELLOW CITY COUNCILORS AND LOOKING FORWARD TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE.

I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM THE CITY DEPARTMENT, SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS AND RESIDENTS IN TODAY'S HEARING.

AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE MY COLLEAGUE CITY COUNCILOR MATT O'MALLEY IF HE HAS ANY OPENING STATEMENT.

>> THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN AND GOOD AFTERNOON, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

I JUST WANT TO BEGIN BY THANKING MY DEAR FRIEND AND COSPONSOR OF THIS IMPORTANT HEARING ORDER, ANDREA CAMPBELL FOR HER PARTNERSHIP AS WELL AS YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN, FOR HOSTING THIS EXPEDITED HEARING TODAY.

WE'RE DEALING WITH THIS SOMEWHAT COUNTER INTUITIVE NOTION IN THE CITY OF BOSTON WHERE WE HAVE THE STRONGEST REAL ESTATE MARKET IN OUR NEARLY 400-YEAR HISTORY YET WE ARE SEEING MOSTLY COMMERCIAL SPACES THAT ARE STAYING VACANT FOR LONG AND LONGER PERIODS OF TIME.

WE ALSO HAVE SOME OF THE NEWER, HIGHER END, HIGH RENT RESIDENTIAL THAT ARE STAYING LOCAL AS WELL.

THIRD ISSUE HAS BEEN, THESE EMPTY LOTS THAT YOU'LL OFTEN SEE AROUND SOME OF THE CITIES.

IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE SENSE GIVEN THE FACT THAT THIS IS SUCH AN UNPRECEDENTED BUILDING BOOM. VACANT PROPERTIES HAVE MANY CAUSES, SOME TIMES THE RENT TOO HIGH TO KEEP A RENT OR THE NOT OFFERING PROPERTY FOR RENT WAITING FOR THE VALUE TO RISE EVEN PERMITTING PROCESS.

WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE CAUSE IS OR WHERE THE VACANT PROPERTY IS LOCATED, VACANCY CAUSES HOLES IN THE

FABRIC OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.  
THE CONVERSATION IS INSPIRED BY  
A PROBLEM MANY OF MY  
CONSTITUENTS HAVE NOTICED IN OUR  
NEIGHBORHOODS M. BUILDINGS  
REMAIN VACANT FOR YEAR AFTER  
YEAR.

I CAN SITE SEVERAL IN JAMAICA  
PLAINS THAT HAVE BEEN VACANT FOR  
ENTEN YEARS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE REAL  
ESTATE MARKET IS CYCLICAL, I  
UNDERSTAND THAT THINGS TAPE TIME  
BUT THERE SEEMS TO BE REAL  
PROBLEM HERE WHICH IS HAVING  
REVERBERATIONS ON OTHER  
BUSINESSES AS WELL.

THE HEARING TO ENCOURAGE  
ESPECIALLY SMALL BUSINESSES AND  
THEIR SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS  
HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE.  
IN SOME CASES WITH EMPTY  
STOREFRONT YOU'LL SEE BUSINESSES  
HAVE REVENUE DROP BY UP TO 25%  
ACCORDING TO A STUDY BY THE  
BOSTON GLOBE.

FOOT TRAFFIC DECLINES WHEN  
THERE'S A VACANT STOREFRONT.  
MOTHER R MORE OVER DATA FROM THE  
PLANNING COUNCIL SHOWN THAT MORE  
OF OUR HOUSING UNITS ARE SITTING  
VACANT IN HIGH END APARTMENT  
BUILDING AS WE BUILD MORE AND  
SEE THE NUMBER OF VACANT  
INCREASE.

PUTS PRESSURES ON OUR SCARCE  
HOUSING STOCK THE SAME WAY THAT  
AirBnB CAN INCREASE RENTS.  
WE WANT THEM TO BE FILLED WITH  
PEOPLE WHO CAN CONTINUE TO  
VIBRANCY OF THE CITY.

TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF VACANCIES,  
COMING TOGETHER TODAY TO GATHER  
INFORMATION ON THIS PROBLEM  
EXPLORE WHOLE RANGE OF  
SOLUTIONS.

POSSIBLE STEPS FORWARD INCLUDE  
COMPREHENSIVE DATA COLLECTION ON  
VACANCY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON.  
POTENTIAL FEE LEVIED ON LONG  
TERM VACANT PROPERTIES TO  
INCENTIVISE LANDLORDS THAT  
ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES TO FILL  
VACANT SPACE THROUGH

STREAMLINING THE PERMITTING  
PROCESS AND SUPPORTING POP-MUCH  
USE OF EMPTY SPACE.

NOW, THIS IS A PROBLEM THAT IS  
FACING NEW YORK, SAN FRANCISCO  
AND CITIES AROUND THE GLOBE AS  
WELL AND THEY'RE EXPLORING  
DIFFERENT CONCEPTS SUCH AS  
VACANCY FEE.

PARTICULARLY EXCITED TO HEAR THE  
SUCCESS STREETS FROM ALL THAT  
HAS BEEN USED BOSTON CLOSE --  
TOWN OF ARLINGTON WHICH WE'LL  
HEAR FROM DURING THE SECOND  
PANEL.

WE CANNOT ALLOW BOSTON  
NEIGHBORHOODS TO HAVE LONG TERM  
VACANCIES BECAUSE LANDLORDS ARE  
SIMPLY HOLDING UP FOR HIGHER  
RENTS.

WE HAVE TO TACKLE THIS ISSUE  
ALONGSIDE ALL FORMS OF BLIGHT TO  
MAKE EVERY STREET IN OUR  
NEIGHBORHOOD VIBRANT.

ANOTHER EXPERIENCE IN MY  
DISTRICT IS THERE WAS LONG  
STANDING WORKPLACE FOR 20  
ARTISTS THAT WERE EVICTED  
EARLIER TO MAKE WAY FOR CONDO  
DEVELOPMENT.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SPOKE OUT  
AGAINST EVICTING THE ARTISTS  
FROM THEIR COMMUNITY AND ARTISTS  
PRACTICING THEIR CRAFT OR SMALL  
BUSINESS AS WELL.

NOW WHAT WE HAVE IS AN EMPTY  
BUILDING WHERE THE NEW LANDLORD  
HAS ALREADY ALIENATED MOST OF  
THE COMMUNITY BY KICKING OUT  
SOME VIBRANT LOCAL BUSINESSES  
AND IT'S GOING TO SIT EMPTY FOR  
YEARS TO COME.

THAT'S WHY THIS IS ABOUT  
AFFORDABILITY AS MUCH AS IT IS  
ACTIVATING OUR STREETS.

AS MORE PEOPLE IN BUSINESSES  
MOVE TO OUR CITY WE SHOULD MAKE  
SURE THAT WE'RE USING EVERY  
AVAILABLE TOOL TO KEEP EVERY  
PROPERTY ACTIVATED AND USED.

A GROWING BOSTON IN 2018 SHOULD  
NOT HAVE EMPTY STOREFRONTS WHEN  
WE HAVE ENTREPRENEURS READY TO  
FILL THEM.

BOSTON SHOULD NOT HAVE PEOPLE WITHOUT HOMES WHERE WE CURRENTLY HAVE SOME HOMES WITHOUT PEOPLE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO BEGINNING THIS CONVERSATION.

THANK YOU TO MY COLLEAGUES FOR THEIR ENGAGE.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR O'MALLEY.

I'D LIKE TO THANK THE STREET CITY CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT ANDREA CAMPBELL FOR OPENING REMARKS.

>> THANK YOU.

I WANT TO THANK YOU AS WELL AS COUNCILOR O'MALLEY FOR BEING PARTNERS IN THIS SPECIFICALLY COUNCILOR O'MALLEY FOR PARTNERING IN THIS WORK, I KNOW SOMETHING YOU CARE DEEPLY ABOUT. THANK YOU FOR THE PARTNERSHIP. THANK ALL THE DEPARTMENT HEADS WHO ARE HERE, ACKNOWLEDGE HARD WORK YOU DO EVERY SINGLE DAY TO ADDRESS THESE VERY ISSUES.

I LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSION TODAY BUT I WANT TO START TO THANK YOU TO YOU AND YOUR TEAM WHO AREN'T REPRESENTED HERE. WHO HELP US DEAL WITH THESE VACANT ABANDONED LOTS EVERY SINGLE DAY.

>> COUNCILOR O'MALLEY ARE COMING AT THIS WITH SHARED GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS BUT WHEN WE FIRST HAVING A CONVERSATION HE WAS FOCUSING ON LARGELY THE BUSINESSES THAT LIE VACANT OR THAT ABANDONED AREN'T DOING ANYTHING.

MY ANGLE IS MORE OF THE RESIDENTIAL UNITS.

THE PROPERTIES THAT ARE VACANT, ABANDONED OR CONSIDERED PROBLEM PROPERTIES BY THE CITY OF BOSTON OR PROPERTIES THAT WE WANTED TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE CITY OF BOSTON.

PROPERTIES THAT HAVE BEEN VACANT, ABANDONED OR PROBLEM PROPERTIES FOR YEARS.

PEOPLE ON MY THIRD YEAR ON THE COUNCIL BUT SOME HAVE BEEN VACANT OR ABANDONED FOR TEN OR MORE YEARS.

INSTEAD OF FOCUSING JUST ON THE SMALL BUSINESSES WE SAID LET'S WOLF TOGETHER AND FOCUS ON ALL OF THE PROPERTIES.

I THINK WHAT WE'LL PROBABLY FOCUS ON TODAY IS THE CITY OWNED PARCELS BUT THE CONVERSATION HAS TO ALSO ADDRESS THE PRIVATELY OWNED PARCEL BECAUSE THAT IS A BIG PART OF THE PROBLEM.

SOME OF THE LOTS THAT ARE IN DISTRICT 4, LARGELY DORCHESTER, MATTAPAN, JAMAICA PLAIN ANDROS ENDALE ARE CITY OWNED SOME ARE PRIVATELY OWNED MAKE SURE THAT IN TALKING MAKE THAT DISTINCTION THAT BEANS WE HAVE DIFFERENT TOMBS IN OUR TOOL KIT TO ADDRESS THE PROPERTIES.

BUT ALSO IF WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TOOLS IN THE TOOL KIT WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE SURE THAT WE DO. THIS IS TIMELY GIVEN THE FACT WE'RE HAVING A CONVERSATION RIGHT NOW OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS, THAT CONVERSATION IS CLEARLY REGULATING PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTIES FOR PARTICULAR NEED AND PURPOSE.

I THINK WE NEED TO BE HAVING A SIMILAR CONVERSATION FOR THOSE PROPERTIES THAT ARE PRIVATELY OWNED BUT BEING LEFT VACANT, ABANDONED AND SOMETIMES PROBLEM PROPERTY BECAUSE THEY ARE VACANT AND ABANDONED.

THERE WAS RECENT ARTICLE THAT CAME OUT ABOUT A STUDY WHERE FOLKS HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT THIS PROBLEM IN VARIOUS MUNICIPALITIES AND CITIES AND TOWNS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

I THOUGHT THEY REALLY SUMMED IT UP WELL WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT WHAT THESE PROPERTIES DO TO A COMMUNITY.

NOT ONLY DO THEY CREATE EYESORES THEY CREATE PUBLIC SAFETY HAZARDS, THEY ARE CRIME MAGNETS, ABANDONED HOUSES REPRESENT A REAL FINANCIAL DRAIN ON BOTH THE NEIGHBORS AND THE CITY AT LARGE. IT CREATES NEIGHBORHOOD FRAGMENTATION AND COMMUNITY

ISOLATION.

THIS IDEA, I THOUGHT THIS WAS REALLY CRITICAL, NO ONE CARES, THESE ARE POWERFUL SIDE EFFECTS THAT MIGHT BE MUCH HARDER FOR US TO QUANTIFY.

LOOKING AT THE HUNDREDS OF CONSTITUENT SERVICES CASES WE HANDLED UNDERSTAND FIRST TERM AT THE TOP OF THE LIST WERE THESE ISSUES.

PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT PROPERTIES ON THEIR STREET THAT WERE EITHER ABANDONED AND THERE WAS CRIMINAL ACTIVITY TAKING PLACE OR SQUATTERS OR SOMETHING ELSE OR GRASS IS OVERGROWN.

SORT OF A BLIGHT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

OR THERE WERE PROBLEM PROPERTIES, TALKING TO CHRIS ENGLISH IS HERE REPRESENTING THE PROBLEM PROPERTIES TAX FORCE ABOUT CASES WHERE TENANTS HAD BEEN COMPLAINING OR ALSO RESIDENTS, HOME OWNERS HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT THE SAME PROPERTY FOR YEARS IN SAYING THE TENANTS IN THE BUILDING OR THAT LOCATION THAT ARE REAL PROBLEM FOR THIS COMMUNITY.

US WORKING PROBLEM PROPERTIES TO TRY TO DO SOMETHING SOMETIMES FINDING A CHALLENGE.

IN ADDITION THESE CASES COVER FOLKS WHO JUST CALLED AND SAID, I CARE ABOUT MY NEIGHBORHOOD AND I DON'T WANT A HOME ON MY PROPERTY -- I'M SORRY ADJACENT TO MY PROPERTY OR IN MY COMMUNITY THAT IS ALLOWED TO SIT VACANT AND OVERGROWN FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME.

NOT ONLY DOES IT AFFECT THE COMMUNITY BUT OF COURSE AFFECTS SOMEONE'S PROPERTY VALUES.

THE POLICE IS LONG IN TERMS OF CONSTITUENT CASES THAT WE'RE DEALING WITH WITH RESPECT TO THIS ISSUE.

SO WE GOT TO A POINT IN MY OFFICE WE SAID, WE DON'T WANT TO KEEP DEALING WITH THESE CASES, CASE BY CASE, ORDER SOME POLICY

CHANGES OR SOMETHING ELSE THAT WE CAN DO TO INCENTIVIZE OWNERS WHO PRIVATELY OWN TO DO SOMETHING.

TO ALSO LOOK AT THE CITY ITSELF LOOK AT OUR OWN PARCELS THAT MIGHT FALL INTO SOME OF THESE CATEGORIES FIGURE OUT WHAT WE CAN DO WITH RESPECT TO THESE PROPERTIES AS WELL.

HOW CAN AS COUNCILOR O'MALLEY SAID, WE ACTIVATE THESE SPACES. MAY BE ACTIVATED FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD ARE FINDING THAT THEY CAN ACTIVATE THESE SPACES FOR COMMUNITY GUARDNESS OR SOMETHING ELSE.

OTHERS LOT EASIER IF THEY ARE CITY-OWNED PARCELS. MUCH MORE DIFFICULT DID THEY ARE PRIVATELY OWNED.

WE STILL NEED TO HAVE CONVERSATION WHAT THAT MIGHT LOOK LIKE.

LASTLY, MIGHT BE LEVERAGING FEES, MIGHT BE REQUIRING SOME SORT OF REGISTRATION, I DON'T KNOW, BUT THIS IS A CONVERSATION I HOPE TO ESTABLISH WHAT MIGHT EXIST TO RELY ON YOUR EXPERTISE TO SEE WHAT DON'T YOU HAVE THAT WE CAN HELP YOU GET IN A TOOL KIT.

AND DATA COLLECTION.

I GOT SOME DATA I LOOK FORWARD TO GOING THROUGH IT WITH RELATED TO THE PARCELS THAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT IN THE CITY OF BOSTON.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THOSE PARCELS.

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE PRIVATELY OWNED PARCEL THAT MIGHT BE MORE CHALLENGING. WHAT CAN WE DO TO GET A BETTER SENSE OF THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM IN OUR DISTRICT AND ALSO WHERE IT IS HAPPENING THE MOST.

ONE OF THE INFORMATION, DOCUMENTS THAT WE RECEIVED EARLIER TODAY ABOUT INACTIVE CITY PARCELS.

IF YOU DO A CURSORY GLANCE



LOOFAH LIST IT LOOKS LIKE  
DORCHESTER, MATTAPAN AND  
ROXBURY.

THAT BOTHERS ME.

SO I THINK YOU HOW CAN WE MAKE  
SURE WHEN WE'RE ADDRESSING THAT  
ISSUE WE ARE HONEST ABOUT WHERE  
THIS IS TAKING PLACE AND  
IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING IT FOR  
THOSE RESIDENTS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP  
IN THIS I THANK YOU IN ADVANCE  
FOR THAT.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK SO FAR.  
COUNCILOR O'MALLEY THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR PARTNERSHIP AND THANK YOU  
FOR SETTING THIS HEARING UP SO  
QUICKLY.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR  
PRESIDENT CAMPBELL.

FOR THE RECORD LIKE TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE COUNCILOR FLAHERTY  
AND COUNCILOR CIOMMO THAT ARE  
BOAST PRESENT AT THIS TIME.

I'D LIKE TO ASK COUNCILOR JANEY  
IF SHE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE  
OPENING STATEMENT.

>> NO STATEMENT.

I'LL RESERVE THAT FOR QUESTIONS.

>> COUNCILOR FLAHERTY?

>> THANK YOU, JUST EMPHASIZE THE  
PIECE THAT OF REFERENCED ON DATA  
COLLECTION.

WE'VE SEEN IT AT THE FOREFRONT  
OF THE PROCESS, SEEN IT ON THE  
FOREFRONT OF, WE'VE TALKED ABOUT  
WITNESS RESPECT TO SHORT-TERM  
RENTALS AND HAVE DISCUSSION  
AROUND COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL  
VACANCY.

DATA COLLECTION PIECE IS  
PARALLEL FOR US TO BE ABLE TO  
CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER,  
OBVIOUSLY IDENTIFYING THE MAYOR  
AND HIS ADMINISTRATION'S  
PRIORITIES AS WELL AS COUNCIL  
PRIORITIES TRYING TO FIND WAYS  
TO FUND THOSE NECESSARY, I  
GUESS, RESULTS OR FIXES, IF YOU  
WILL.

ENGAGING WE GET THE DATA, ENGAGE  
THE COMMUNITY WHAT IS  
APPROPRIATE, WHETHER IT'S  
RESIDENTIAL OR COMMERCIAL, IF

THEY'RE OVER DEVELOPED  
CONVERSATION AROUND PARKING WITH  
RESPECT TO THOSE VACANT  
CITY-OWNED PARCELS THAT ARE  
DEVELOPABLE OR UNDEVELOPPABLE,  
AGAIN STARTS WITH THAT DATA  
COLLECTION IF WE HAVE THE DATA  
WE HAVE THE EVIDENCE WE HAVE THE  
FACTS.

I THINK WE CAN FIND SOME ISSUES  
FOR THAT.

LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING  
TESTIMONY AND CONTINUE  
PARTNERSHIP AND WORKING TOGETHER  
TO TRY TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR FL  
FLAHERTY.

COUNCILOR CIOMMO.

THANK YOU.

AT THIS TIME I'D LIKE TO  
RECOGNIZE THE CITY PANEL THAT IS  
PRESENT.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHIEF JOHN,  
DEVELOPMENT CHIEF, SHEILA.

INSPECTIONAL SERVICE  
COMMISSIONER BUDDY CHRISTOPHER.  
CHRIS ENGLISH, PROBLEM  
PROPERTIES TAX FORCE.  
AND COMMISSIONER OF ASSESSING,  
GALE.

ANY OF YOU HAVE LIKE TO START  
WITH OPENING STATEMENTS?

>> MR. CHAIR, MEMBERS OF THE  
COUNCIL, WE APPRECIATE THE  
INVITATION TO COME AND TALK TO  
YOU ABOUT VERY IMPORTANT MATTER  
AND THE ADMINISTRATION LOOKS  
FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO WORK  
WITH YOU TO LEARN MORE, TO  
CONTINUE DIALOGUE ABOUT HOW WE  
CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR CITY  
AND OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND  
IDENTIFY PROBLEM PROPERTIES AND  
TACKLE THE ISSUE.

TODAY I'M JOINED BY NUMBER OF  
FOLKS FOR RECORD MY NAME IS JOHN  
BARROS, CHIEF OF ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT FOR CITY OF BOSTON.

I WANT TO FOCUS ON A CUP OF  
DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE QUESTIONS  
THAT HAVE BEEN PUT IN FRONT OF  
US IN THIS HEARING.

WANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT LOOK

FORWARD TO DIGGING INTO THE DATA AND GETTING BACK TO YOU ON SPECIFIC AS WE HEAR QUESTIONS TODAY AND SORT OF UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU GUYS WANT TO DISCUSS. OVERALL, BOSTON HAS IN THE LAST FEW YEARS REAL ECONOMIC BOOM AND THAT HAS AFFECTED OUR VACANCY RATES ON THE COMMERCIAL SIDE, ON THE OFFERS SIDE.

WE'VE SEEN A DECLINE IN VACANCY OVERALL.

WE DO SEE MORE VACANCY IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE CITY THAN WE'VE SEEN IN OTHERS.

THE OVERALL OFFICE VACANCY RATE FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON IS AT 6.7% AT THIS MOMENT.

AND THAT'S DECLINED FROM 2014 WHERE IT WAS RIGHT UNDER 11%. IN SOME NEIGHBORHOODS WE SEE A HIGHER RATE THAN IN OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS.

IT RANGES FROM 1% OR 1.4% ALL THE WAY UP TO 8%.

THE SPECIFICS WHEN YOU START TO LOOK AT A PLACE THAT I TYPICALLY HAVE THESE CONVERSATIONS AND I FEEL LIKE THE IMPACT IS FELT IS AN OVERBURDEN, EVEN THE NUMBERS THERE ARE FAIRLY GOOD.

EVERYTHING IN THE SINGLE DIGITS. THE HIGHEST MAIN STREET VACANCY RATE THAT WE HAVE RIGHT NOW IS -- THAT ONE IS WELL ABOVE, IT'S DOUBLE EVERYTHING ELSE. IT'S DOUBLED THE NEXT HIGHEST IT'S AT 15%.

THE NEXT HIGHEST IS MATTAPAN AT 8.9% AND IT FOLLOWS FROM THAT. THE LOWEST VACANCY RATE IN OUR MAIN STREET IS CHINATOWN AT THE LOW 1%.

THEN SECOND LOWEST WOULD BE JP AT 1.

4%, CENTRAL SOUTH.

IT RANGES ALL THE WAY UP TO MATTAPAN AT 15% I HAVE THEM HERE I CAN SHARE WITH YOU THESE NUMBERS.

THAT'S FROM A PERCENTAGE STANDPOINT AND NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

BUT THE REALITY IS THAT THEY ARE

THERE FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME.  
AND THEY IMPACT OUR LOCAL  
ECONOMY, THEY IMPACT QUALITY OF  
LIFE.

THEY IMPACT MANY BUSINESSES AND  
SOME BUSINESSES MORE THAN OTHERS  
RELY ON CLUSTERS OF BUSINESSES  
LIKE THEIR BUSINESSES TO  
BRING -- FOR FOOTED TRAFFIC  
CREATE THE VIBRANCY THAT THEY  
NEED TO CONTINUE TO BE VIBRANT  
BUSINESSES.

WE DO WORK WITH OUR SMALL  
BUSINESSES, PARTICULARLY IN THE  
MAIN STREET AREA ON THIS ISSUE,  
WE MEET WITH LANDLORDS OFTEN WE  
HAVE CONVERSATION WITH BUILD  
KNOWLEDGE OWNERS BUT WE  
UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOING ON.  
WE AS YOU KNOW OFFER ASSISTANCE  
TO BUILDING OWNERS ON STOREFRONT  
IMPROVEMENTS.

THAT IMPROVES THEIR ASSETS TO  
MAKE SURE THAT IT'S -- IT'S AN  
INCENTIVE FOR THEM TO BRING IN  
THE BUSINESS.

WE WILL THEN WORK WITH  
BUSINESSES THAT WANT TO GO INTO  
LOCATIONS AND PROVIDE ON-SITE  
ASSISTANCE, BUSINESS PLANNING  
WILL PROVIDE EVERYTHING FROM  
COST MANAGEMENT ON, ENERGY  
EFFICIENCY, SUSTAINABILITY.  
WE'LL PROVIDE LOANS WHERE NEEDED  
TO SMALL BUSINESSES THAT ARE  
TRYING TO OCCUPY THESE SPACES.  
WE'VE BEEN TRYING REALLY HARD  
TO, A, STAY ON TOP OF IT.  
B, UNDERSTAND THE LOCAL AND  
INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS OF  
BUSINESS OWNERS THEN TRY TO  
ASSIST WITH THE TWO OF THEM.  
WE DO HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT  
THESE VACANT PROPERTIES ARE  
OCCUPIED AND HAVE VIBRANT  
BUSINESSES IN THEM.

GIVE YOU THAT QUICK SUMMARY ON  
VACANCY IN BOSTON WHAT WE'RE  
LOOKING AT I WANT TO TURN IT  
OVER TO MY COLLEAGUES.

>> THANK YOU, MR. BARROS AND  
COUNCILOR FLYNN FOR HOLDING THIS  
IMPORTANT HEARING IT'S A TOPIC  
THAT WE THINK ABOUT QUITE A LOT

WE'RE THINKING ABOUT IT MORE AND MORE GIVEN THE TIGHTNESS OF THE REAL ESTATE MARKET.

I DO HAVE SOME DATA BUT I COULD SHARE WITH YOU.

I DON'T THINK IT'S A COMPLETE SET I THINK WE SHOULD THINK HOW TO MAKE IT COMPLETE.

BUT JUST WANTED TO SHARE WHAT WE DO HAVE.

SINCE GOING WAY BACK THE CITY HAS EVERY YEAR CONDUCTED A SURVEY OF VACANT AND DISTRESSED PROPERTIES BOTH RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL AND UNTIL 1997 WHEN THIS STARTED THERE WERE 1200 VACANT AND DISTRESSED PROPERTIES IN THE CITY.

AND BASED ON PRELIMINARY RESULTS THERE'S 405 PROPERTIES THAT WERE IDENTIFIED AS BOTH VACANT AND DISTRESSED.

BUT I WANT TO SAY THAT OWNERS OF 265 OF THESE, SO THE VAST MAJORITY PROVIDED EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE RENOVATING THEM OR TYING SOME ACTION IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE THEY WERE GOING TO COURT TO CLEAR UP TITLE.

RENOVATION LIKE I SAID.

THEY WERE GOING TO PUT THEM BACK IN PRODUCTIVE USE.

OWNERS OF 140 PROPERTIES THAT WERE VACANT AND DISTRESSED HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO OUR LETTERS. THOSE ARE THE ONES THAT WILL GO ON WEBSITE.

WE'RE COMPLETING THAT LIST, THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE VERY SOON.

WE DO THIS EVERY YEAR.

FOR CITY THIS SIZE THAT IS VERY -- IT'S A GOOD NUMBER, IT'S REASONABLE NUMBER BUT IF YOU'RE LIVING NEXT TO THAT BUILDING IT DOESN'T FEEL GOOD IF YOU ARE LIVING ON THAT STREET.

WE DO REACH OUT TO ALL THE OWNERS, WE GIVE OUR NUMBERS AND OUR CELL PHONE NUMBERS, CALL US. SEE IF WE CAN HELP YOU BUT THAT'S THE NUMBER THAT WE HAVE IN 2017.

WE HAVE ABOUT, I BREAK OUT BY COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL WE

HAVE IT BY NEIGHBORHOOD I CAN  
MAKE THAT AVAILABLE.  
WHAT WE DON'T HAVE GOOD DATA ON,  
WE DO USE THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY  
SURVEY, WHAT WE HAVE DATA ON  
NON-DISTRESSED VACANT  
PROPERTIES.  
THEY DO A SURVEY EVERY YEAR, BUT  
IT'S JUST THAT, A SURVEY WITH A  
VERY HIGH MARGIN OF ERROR.  
THEY SAY THAT THERE'S -- IN 2016  
THERE WERE 21,000 VACANT UNITS,  
MANY OF THOSE ARE ON THE MARKET  
TO BE RENTED.  
ON THE MARKET TO BE SOLD.  
PEOPLE HAVEN'T MOVED IN YET, ET  
CETERA.  
THERE IS ONE CATEGORY THAT DOES  
GIVE US A WEE BIT OF PAUSE,  
SEASONAL RECREATIONAL OR  
OCCASIONAL USE THAT WOULD BE  
PART OF THE AirBnB STORY THAT  
IS 3700 THEN HAVE OTHER VACANT  
CATEGORY FOR 4500.  
SO I THINK DISCUSSION MOVES  
FORWARD WE DO NEED TO FIGURE OUT  
HOW TO GET AT -- UNDERSTANDING,  
ARE THERE REALLY VIABLE  
PROPERTIES THAT WE KNOW BECAUSE  
WE CAN SEE THEM.  
RESIDENTIAL IS HARD TO DETERMINE  
HOW DO WE COLLECT RESIDENTIAL  
DATA ON RESIDENTIAL UNITS THAT  
ARE NOT BEING OFFERED.  
THAT MAY BE VACANT ARE NOT BEING  
OFFERED.  
I JUST WANT TO SAY ONE THING FOR  
THE CITY COUNCIL THAT HAS NOT  
RECEIVED -- WE DISTRIBUTED TO  
COUNCILOR CAMPBELL A FEW HOURS  
AGO, I APOLOGIZE FOR THE  
LATENESS OF THAT.  
INFORMATION ON OUR VACANT LOTS.  
CURRENTLY WE HAVE 1,251 LOTS IN  
THE CITY OF BOSTON, MANY OF  
THOSE ARE TEN SQUARE FEET, SOME  
OF THEM ARE CERTAINLY BUILDABLE.  
THE GOOD NEWS HERE IS WALSH  
ADMINISTRATION, YOU KNOW BECAUSE  
YOU'RE ATTENDING MANY OF THE  
MEETINGS WE WORKED VERY HARD TO  
GET THIS NUMBER DOWN.  
OUR GOAL IS NOT TO OWN ANYTHING  
AND IT SHOULD ALL BE IN THE

RIGHT HANDS, WITH THE RIGHT  
COMMUNITYÑi PROCESS.  
TO DATE WE HAVE 875 OF THOSE  
LOTS EITHER IN ACTIVE  
DISPOSITION, COMMUNITY MEETINGS  
ARE ONGOING, WE'VE DESIGNATED  
THE DEVELOPER, WE'RE TRYING TO  
FIGURE OUT THE FINANCING OR  
THEY'RE UNDER REVIEW LIKE THE  
GROVE.  
WOULD TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW  
TO WIDEN THE STREET,  
ENCROACHMENTS, SOME ARE VERY  
COMPLICATED.  
BUT THERE ARE 875 LOTS THAT WE  
ARE WORKING VERY HARD ON EVERY  
DAY.  
THERE'S ANOTHER 108 OF THAT 1200  
THAT ARE URBAN WILD.  
THAT WE OWN THEM BECAUSE THERE'S  
NOT ANOTHER GOOD OWNERSHIP  
STRUCTURE RIGHT NOW AS  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION FREEZE  
UP SOME OF THEIR CAPACITY AND  
THEY HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD ABOUT  
TAKING SOME OF THESE.  
BUILT THEY CAN'T MANAGE ALL OF  
THEM.  
THERE THERE IS 268 INACTIVE.  
PARTICULARLY INACTIVE WE KNOW  
WHAT THEY ARE.  
THEY'RE NOT OUR FIRST CHOICE  
LOTS BECAUSE THEY HAVE LOW  
CROPPINGS I OR THINGS WE'LL GET  
TO THOSE AFTER WE PUT OUT ALL OF  
THE LOTS THAT ARE MORE  
DEVELOPABLE OR MORE EASY TO  
DEVELOP.  
THEY ARE CONTAMINATED SO UNTIL  
WE GET STATE MONEY, ALWAYS  
APPLYING FOR FED CLEAN-UP MONEY  
WE DON'T WANT TO OFFER TO THE  
PUBLIC.  
OR OFTENTIMES NEIGHBORHOODS  
BECAUSE THEY ARE FEELING LIKE --  
TOO MUCH THEY HAVE ASKED TO HOLD  
BACK UNTIL THEY CAN REALLY SPEND  
THE TIME AND THINK THROUGH WITH  
US WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE HAPPEN  
ON THOSE SITES.çóÑi  
OUR STAFFçó KNOWÑi EACH AND EVERY  
PLOT WHICH HAS NOT BEEN THE  
CASE, THE VAST MAJORITY ARE IN  
PROCESS AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO

THE DAY WHERE WE HAVE A HANDFUL OF LOTS AND THAT WE'RE WORKING WITH TITLE TO GET MORE INVENTORY TO PUT THOSE BACK IN PRODUCTIVE USE.

I'LL CLOSE THERE.

THOSE ARE DATA POINTS THAT I DO HAVE.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, CHIEF.

BEFORE WE CONTINUE WITH THE PANEL I'D LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CITY COUNCILOR LYDIA EDWARDS HAS GYPPEDED US AS HAS CITY COUNCILOR ANNNISSA ESSAIBI GEORGE.

>> I'LL RESERVE MY COMMENTS FOR LATER.

>> I DON'T HAVE AN OPENING STATEMENT I'M HAPPY TO TAKE ANY QUESTIONS.

>> COUNCILOR O'MALLEY.

>> THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING HERE.

I WANTED TO ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE FOR MY TEAM, HAVE DONE EXTRAORDINARY RESEARCH THANK YOU ALL FOR THIS.

CLEARLY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A WHOLE HOST OF ISSUES, SPECIFICALLY COMMERCIAL VACANCY, HIGH END RESIDENTIAL AND VACANT LOTS FOR THIS FIRST ROUND OF QUESTIONING WHICH I KNOW THE CHAIR WILL KEEP ME TO A STRICT TIME LIMIT.

I WANT TO FOCUS ON THE COMMERCIAL VACANCY.

IN ALL HONESTY I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU, YOU GUYS ARE DOING GREAT WORK SPECIFIC PLEA CHIEF DYLAN I'M NOT TRYING TO BE CRITICAL I RECOGNIZE THAT THE NUMBER OF VACANCIES HAS RUN DOWN, BUT AS IT RELATES TO CERTAIN COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS WE SEEM TO BE SEEING, I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S ANECDOTALLY, LONGER STAYS.

THERE ARE TWO PARTICULAR LARGE SCALE ONES IN MY DISTRICT THAT HAVE BEEN VACANT, ANCHOR BUSINESSES THAT HAVE BEEN VACANT CLOSE TO TEN YEARS.

ONE IN JAMAICA PLAINS. THIS.



NOT PICKING ON DETROIT BUT SORT OF IT HAS BEEN AN ISSUE, GETTING BETTER, BUT DETROIT SAW VACANCY BECAUSE OF LACK OF INTEREST. I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CASE HERE.

I THINK WE HAVE SOME LANDLORDS WHO ARE PURPOSELY MAKING THE DECISION THAT BY KEEPING SOMETHING EMPTY THEY WILL BE ABLE TO COMMAND A HIGHER RENT DOWN THE ROAD.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT THAT OR WHAT CAN WE

JOHN, YOU ARE IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD, YOU SEE THIS, ARE YOU SEEING SOME OF THESE COMMERCIAL EMPTY SPACES AND WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT?

>> I AGREE WITH YOU.

I THINK I CAN SITE BUILDINGS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY.

I THINK WE HAVE DISCUSSED THEM. I THINK I WANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT

THE BUILDINGS, I KNOW YOU WERE SAYING TALKING ABOUT THESE DECADES OF VACANCY.

WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE TRYING TO TURN OVER HIS SPACE, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SPECULATION IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT COMES AT A COST TO THE CITY, TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

COMES AT A COST TYPICALLY IT INCREASES CRIME AND NUMBER OF OTHER ISSUES.

SO, RECOGNIZE THE ISSUE -- THE ISSUES.

OUR BEST TOOLS RIGHT NOW TO INCENTIVIZE INVESTMENT.

DOESN'T MEAN THAT -- THIS IS A GOOD CONVERSATION WE SHOULD CONTINUE IT BUT THAT'S RIGHT NOW.

INCENTIVIZE AN INVESTMENT AND TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS TO UNDERSTAND THE END GOAL OF OWNERS.

I THINK ON SOME OF THE CHRONICALLY VACANT BUILDINGS WE HAVE NOT SEEN A LOT OF SUCCESS. ON THE OTHER ONES WHERE WE HAVE BUILDING OWNERS WHO ARE

RESPONSIVE, TRYING TO WORK WITH US, WE CAN GET CREATIVE AND HELP FIGURE OUT AND THEY PUSH US TO BECOME MORE CREATIVE AND Içó THINK THE ADMINISTRATIONçó IS WILLING TO WORK WITH THEM AND THINK HOW TO DO THAT.

I AM AT A LOSS, HOWEVER, TO REALLY GIVE YOU A ANSWER TO HOW RIGHT NOW WE ARE ABLE TO GET AÑi LAND OWNER, A BUILDING OWNER WHO PAYS THEIR TAXES AND KEEPS A MODEST LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AND CLEANLINESS ON THEIR SITE TO DO ANYTHING WITH THEIR PROPERTY.

>> WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON POTENTIAL VACANCY FEE?

I WANT TO BE CLEAR.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT BEING OVERLY ONEROUS OR BEING -- STICKING IT TO THE LANDLORD WHO IS VAC ANT AFTER ONE TENANT MOVES OUT.

I'M TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, TEN YEARS EMPTY.

ASSESSING SOME FEE BASED ON SQUARE FOOTAGE, BASED ON LENGTH OF VACANCY.

WOULD YOU GUYS BE OPEN TO THAT?

>> I THINK WE'RE HAPPY TO BE INVITED TO BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION.

WE THINK IS REALLY IMPORTANT CONVERSATION TO HAVE WITH THE COUNCIL.

WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT IS OUT THERE AND REALLY LOOK AT THIS AND LOOK ATçó DATA.

WE THINK, HOWEVER, WE SHARE YOUR FRUSTRATION.

THE MAYOR SHARES YOUR CALLS FROM PEOPLE TO ABLE TO DO SOMETHING, LET'S CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION. WE'RE GOING TO BE VERY ACTIVE WITH YOU AND RESPONSIVE.

>> I WANT TO BE CLEAR THIS IS THE HEARING OR VERY FIRST STEP, NO ORDINANCE HAS BEEN DRAFTED. I DON'T THINK THIS IS SOMETHING WE CAN ASSESS FEES WAY OUT OF THE PROBLEM.

IT'S A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH.

IT'S ABOUT COLLECTING DATA.

SEEING HOW CITY CAN EXPEDITE  
CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS AROUND  
CREATING A BUSINESS OR OPENING A  
BUSINESS, SOMETHING I KNOW ALL  
ARE COMMITTED TO.

WE'LL HEAR FROM THISñi IN OUR  
SECOND PANEL, LEVEE A FEE,  
SEEING VACANCY RATE, MUCH  
SMALLER TOWN, GOOD SAMPLE SIZE  
CUT IN HALF.

OTHER CITIES ARE DOING IT AT  
MUCH HIGHER RATES AND IT'SñMÓ A  
GOOD TOOL TOñr HAVE.

ANOTHER PERSON FROM WHOM WE'LL  
HEAR IN THE SECOND PANEL IS  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MAIN  
STREETS WHO CAN TALK ABOUT  
THROUGH SOME WORK WITH ALL OF  
YOU, THERE WAS EMPTY SPACE,  
SUPPOSED TO BE NEW RESTAURANT,  
FELL THROUGH,xD ACTIVATED AS  
POP-UP BEER GARDEN FOR A NUMBER  
OF MONTHS.

TREMENDOUSLY SUCCESS.

THESE ARE THE TYPE OF IDEAS I  
HOPE WE CAN ENGAGE GOING GO  
FORWARD.

JUST LAST QUESTION TO YOU CHIEF,  
6.7% IS CURRENT OFFICE VACANCY  
RATE DOES THAT INCLUDE  
COMMERCIAL?

WHEN YOU SAY OFFICE THAT  
INCLUDES -- SORT OF UMBRELLA  
TERM FOR COMMERCIAL.

>> VACANCY RATE, EXCUSE ME.

>> IS THAT BASED ON MLS OR REAL  
ESTATE LISTINGS?

IN OTHER WORDS, DO WE DRAW OUR  
DATA FROM THE ENTIRE BUILDING  
STOCK OR SOMETHING THAT'S NOT ON  
THE MARKET WOULD THAT BE  
INCLUDED AS WELL?

>> I HAVE TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER  
IN HOW WE DEFINE AND WHAT WE'RE  
LOOKING AT RIGHT NOW FOR THE  
SOURCE IS SOME OF OUR BROKERAGE  
FIRMS.

AND CONTINUOUSLY FEED US THIS  
INFORMATION.

>> THEN THE OTHER QUESTION THIS  
WILL GET YOU BECAUSE MY TIME IS  
UP FOR THIS ROUND, THERE'S AN  
ISSUE IN WEST ROXBURY, HAD A  
BUILDING, DIFFICULT NEIGHBORHOOD

PROCESS WAS ABLE TO SECURE APPROVAL AND SEVERAL VARIANCE, IT'S NOW FOR SALE. SOME WOULD ARGUE THAT WELL, THIS IS UNFAIR BECAUSE THINGS CAN TAKE TIME. THIS HAS GONE THROUGH THE PROCESS, OWNER MADE AN DETERMINATION TO GET SYSTEM IT OF A II IT'S GONE THROUGH THE PERMITTING PROCESS. IS THAT A COMMON THEME IS THERE ANY CONTROLS THAT WE HAVE OVER THAT?

>> CROWD IS MONEY, IT'S A FREE ECONOMY. THIS IS WHERE IT STARTS TO AFFECT THE NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE BUSINESS SEE UP TO 25% DECREASE BECAUSE OF THE VACANCIES THAT WE'RE SEEING MORE RESIDENTIAL UNITS BUILT YET IT'S NOT NECESSARILY ALLEVIATING IN TERMS OF PRICES, IT IS AFFECTING US ALL.

JUST AS LANDLORDS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO LOOK OUT FOR THEIR BOTTOM LINE AS CITY COUNCILOR I HAVE TO FIGHT TO LOOK OUT OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

>> WE'RE STARTING TO SEE FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS A LOT OF PROSPECTING ON BUILDINGS. PEOPLE WHO COME TO US AND BUSINESS, WANT TO IMPLEMENT. FIRST QUESTION THEY USUALLY ASK, WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO PUT THIS.

WE CAN'T REALLY ASSIST THEM WITH THAT.

GIVE US A SELECTION OF PLACE WHICH WE CAN TELL YOU WHAT THE PROCEDURE IS.

WE WORKED VERY HARD, I'VE WORKED WITH JOHN ON BUILDINGS THAT WERE PROBLEMS TO SEE IF THERE WAS SOMETHING THAT WE COULD DO TO INCENTIVIZE THE OWNER TO TAKE THAT NEXT STEP TO MORE OF A VIABLE BUSINESS.

WHAT WE DON'T SEE A LOT OF FLIPPING ON THE BUSINESS END OF GETTING PERMIT IN PLACE THEN

FLIPPING IT OVER BECAUSE NOW ALL THE CHANGES THE REGULATIONS HAVE TO BE REVISITED.

>> THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

>> COUNCILOR CAMPBELL.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR FLYNN.

I SEE THIS AS BECAUSE I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT MY 8:00 LESION HAVE TIME I WON'T GO INTO ALL THE BUCKETS, ONE IS DATA COLLECTION PIECE.

SECOND IS THESE INCENTIVESñi TO DO SOMETHING AND THEN THE THIRD IS, WHAT OTHER POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS MIGHT BE OUT THERE.

FIRST FOCUS GOING ON THE DATA COLLECTION PIECE.

BEFORE WE GET TO THE RESIDENTIAL NUMBERS, CHIEF, THAT YOU SHARED, IT IS DISTURBING WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE VACANCY RATES PARTICULARLY FOR RAD PAN -- MATTAPAN IN CONTRAST TO THE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS INCLUDING CHINATOWN.

I THINK THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE SEE AND FRUSTRATES THEM AND WHY THEY SAY NOTHING HAPPENS TO THESE NEIGHBORHOODS, I PUT THAT IN QUOTES, BECAUSE THEY LOOK AT THESE NUMBERS OR THEY SEE THE VISIBLE PROPERTIES THAT ARE VACANT AND THAT ARE DISTURBING. AS WE TALK ABOUT AND GIVE TO THE INCENTIVES IN TERMS OF RESOLVING VACANCIES, AS WE TALK ABOUT POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF THIS WILL BE TESTING OUT NEW IDEAS, TESTING OUT IDEAS FROM OTHER MUNICIPALITIES OTHER COMMUNITIES.

I ALWAYS BELIEVE IN THE IDEA OF TESTING THINGS OUT. AND MAYBE YOU TRIED IN THESE NEIGHBORHOODS YOU START WITH PLACES THAT HAD HIGHEST VACANCY RATES AROUND I IMAGINE WITH THESE PROPERTIES THAT ARE VACANT THE NUMBER THAT YOU JUST SHARED, THESE OFFICES THAT ARE VACANT THEY HAVE BEEN VACANT MAYBE FOR A LONG TIME.

SO, ONE OF THE QUESTIONS I HAVE ON JUST THE DATA PIECE, IS THE ONLY DATA AVAILABLE IS IT FROM THE BROKERAGE FIRMS AND DO THEY SEND IT TO US ON A REGULAR BASIS?

IS THERE SOME RELATIONSHIP -- THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES THAT WE CAN GET THIS DATA FROM? AND THEN MY SORT OF LAST QUESTION RELATED TO THAT, WHO IS GIVING US THE INFORMATION, WHEN DO WE GIVE THE INFORMATION, I'M ASSUMING ALL OF THESE OFFICE SPACES ARE SPACES THAT ARE OWNED BY A PRIVATE OWNER NOT BY US. >> RIGHT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. MADAM PRESIDENT, I JUST WANT TO -- I'VE GOT TWO SETS OF INFORMATION HERE ON DIFFERENT SOURCES I JUST WANT TO CALL THEM OUT A LITTLE BIT.

I SHARE YOUR QUEST TO IMPROVE OUR DATA AND GET MORE DATA. FOR WHAT I HAVE NOW, THE OFFICE VACANCY RATES ARE COMING FROM THE BROKERAGE FIRMS. FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOODS WHEN I QUOTED THE THE MATTAPAN NUMBER AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD NUMBERS THEY'RE FROM MY PAIN PIECE. WHEN I LOOK AT THE MAIN STREETS NUMBERS, THOSE ARE NUMBERS THAT WE ARE BEING REPORTED BY TYPICALLY THE DIRECTORS OF OUR MAIN STREETS AND WHAT THEY'RE SEEING IN THEIR AREA. AND SO THE MATTAPAN NUMBER OF 15.2% WHICH IS IN FACT -- COMING FROM IT IS MAYBE STREETS. STAYING WITH MATTAPAN OF 8.9. OWNERSHIP, AS YOU KNOW WE DO NOT OWN THE LOT IN OUR MAIN STREETS OUTSIDE OF CITY PUBLIC BU BUILDINGS. LIBRARIES, ON THE MAIN STREETS AREAS. WE ARE, HOWEVER, THE MAYOR HAS ASKED US AND WE LAUNCHED IMAGINE BOSTON 2030 WITH RESIDENTS WERE TELLING US THAT WE NEEDED TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN THE MAIN STREETS AND BE MORE ACTIVE IN THE REAL ESTATE SPACE.

WE DID LAUNCH A PILOT.  
SO THE CITY YOU SYSTEM BOLD  
PROPERTY AND WE OWN SOME  
BUILDINGS THAT WE ARE GOING TO  
ACTIVATE.  
FOR THE FIRST TIME WE LOOK  
FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU ON  
THIS BECAUSE IT WON'T BE EASY.  
WE FALL IN THE MAYOR RESPONDING  
TO THE COUNCIL TO LOOK AT MIXED  
USE LIBRARIES.  
WE'RE GOING TO LOOK AT THE MIXED  
USED LIBRARY THAT WILL HAVE  
HOUSING ON TOP OF THE LIBRARY TO  
CREATE AN AFFORDABLE CONDITION  
FOR HOUSING TO BE BUILT AND  
WE'LL LOOK AT SMALL BUSINESS  
SPACE AND STOREFRONT, OF THE  
STREET FRONT OF THE LIBRARY TO  
CREATE --  
>> I THINK WE'RE TALKING  
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.  
COUNCILOR BAKER IS NOT HERE,  
HE'S ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT  
LIBRARY HOUSING ON TOP.  
BUT GOING BACK TO THE DATA  
PIECE, SOME OF THESE NUMBERS  
WHERE MAIN STREETS, BROKERAGE  
FIRM ARE PROBABLY OWNED AND SOME  
INCLUDE SOME CITY OWNED  
COMMERCIAL LOTS THAT ARE  
CURRENTLY VACANT.  
>> ON THE LOTS, VERY DIFFERENT.  
>> COMMERCIAL OFFICES, SORRY.  
>> WE OWN -- I CAN PROBABLY BY  
HAND TALK ABOUT BUILD THANKS WE  
OWN THAT HAVE VACANT COMMERCIAL  
RETAIL SPACE.  
TYPICALLY WE VACANT BECAUSE  
NEIGHBORHOOD ASKED US TO WORK  
WITH THEM TO GET A TYPE OF  
BUSINESS.  
THE BOWLING BUILDING HAS TWO  
VACANT SPOTS AND ONE THE LEASE  
IS BEING NEGOTIATED AND WE'LL  
HAVE HOPEFULLY A RESTAURANT ON  
THE FRONT CORNER OF THE 7800  
SQUARE FEET.  
THE SPACE IN THE GOLDEN  
BUILDING.  
ONE IS MUCH SMALLER LOCATION  
THAT WAS VACATED BY HALEY HOUSE.  
WE ARE VERY ACTIVE IN TALKING TO  
THE NEIGHBORS WHAT THEY WANT TO

SEE THERE AND THEY HAVE ASKED US TO HOLD THAT SECOND LOCATION UNTIL WE CAN HAVE MORE OF THE ALLOCATION TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

>> I THINK WHAT WOULD BE HELPFUL IS FOR EVERYONE INCLUDE PEOPLE WHO AREN'T HERE, SOME COLLEAGUES AREN'T HERE, WHERE DO WE GET THE INFORMATION TO DETERMINE OUR VACANT COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES. HOW THEY GIVE THAT INFORMATION TO US, IS IT IN TIMING WHICH WE RECEIVE THAT, IS IT REQUIRED, IS IT WEEKLY, IS IT MONTHLY. DOES IT COVER PRIVATELY OWNED AND CITY OWNED BOTH.

THEN WHAT THOSE LOTS ARE. SOME SORT OF BREAKING THAT OUT I THINK WOULD BE REALLY HELPFUL. THE PAPERWORK THAT YOU SENT US, THEN GOING TO THIS INFORMATION YOU SAID, CHIEF, I'LL END WITH THIS BUT I'M SURE EVERYONE CARES ABOUT THIS.

IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE -- THERE'S A LOT OF NUMBERS, SURVEY THAT YOU CITED THE 875 THAT ARE ACTIVE -- I'M SORRY, 1997. THIS IS A SURVEY OF -- WAIT. BY WHO AND FOR WHAT?

>> STAFF GO OUT AND THEY DRIVE UP AND DOWN STREETS AND THEY ALSO GET INFORMATION FROM WATER AND SEWER, WHAT HAS BEEN TURNED OFF.

WHO OWES BACK TAXES. THERE'S A WHOLE METHODOLOGY ON WHERE THEY REALLY FOCUS THEN THEY LOOK AT LAST YEAR'S SURVEY TO SORT OF TRACK PROGRESS. IT IS A BUILDING BY BUILDING STREET SURVEY THAT WE DO EVERY YEAR TO GET A LIST OF VACANT AND DISTRESSED PROPERTIES.

>> SO, INFORMATION RELATED TO THAT SURVEY FOR EACH YEAR IS AVAILABLE FOR US TO LOOK AT?

>> TO GET THAT TO YOU BY NEIGHBORHOOD, YES.

>> IT TELLS US THE TOTAL NUMBER OF WHAT MIGHT BE VACANT PROBABLY UNDERESTIMATE OF PROBABLY SUCH A

--

>> WHAT I'VE SAID EARLIER, I



THINK THIS IS ANOTHER PROBLEM I  
DON'T KNOW HOW TO COUNT IT IS  
WHAT IS NOT DISTRESSED AND  
VACANT.

WHO HAS RESIDENTIAL UNIT OR  
COMMERCIAL UNITS THAT LOOK GOOD,  
THERE'S NO DISTRESS, WE ALL KNOW  
BUILDING WHEN WE SEE DISTRESSED  
BUILDING WE KNOW WHAT IT IS.  
WE DON'T COUNT VACANT BUILDINGS.  
RESIDENTIAL WOULD BE VERY HARD  
TO DETERMINE WHAT IS VACANT.  
I GUESS RETAIL MUCH MORE EASILY  
BUT WE DON'T COUNT THOSE BECAUSE  
WE'RE NOT WORKING ON THAT  
PROBLEM RIGHT NOW.

>> OKAY.

I'M GOING TO SAVE MY QUESTIONS  
FOR THE NEXT ROUND.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU COUNCILOR  
PRESIDENT.

COUNCILOR JANEY.

>> THANK YOU SO MUCH, MR. CHAIR  
AND CERTAINLY WANT TO SAY THANK  
YOU TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS  
IMPORTANT HEARING ORDER, THIS IS  
A HUGE ISSUE, CERTAINLY IN MY  
DISTRICT I SHARE A LOT OF THE  
CONCERNS THAT COUNCILOR CAMPBELL  
ALREADY RAISED AROUND THE VACANT  
SEE RATES IN CERTAIN  
NEIGHBORHOODS, WHETHER WE'RE  
TALKING ABOUT COMMERCIAL,  
WHETHER WE'RE TALKING ABOUT  
HOUSING, WHETHER WE'RE TALKING  
ABOUT EMPTY LOTS.

THAT IS A VERY TIMELY, IMPORTANT  
DISCUSSION.

VERY INTERESTED IN HOW WE  
COLLECT DATA, WHAT DATA WE  
CURRENTLY HAVE.

I'M VERY INTERESTED IN PURSUING  
SOME SORT OF FEE OR TAX  
STRUCTURE THAT COULD HELP  
ADDRESS THIS.

I'VE HEARD FROM PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
AN EMPTY LOT WHO SAY THAT IT'S  
CHEAP TO JUST PAY THE FINE  
THAN TO ACTUALLY MAINTAIN THE  
LOT.

AND THAT I THINK IS QUITE  
DISRESPECTFUL FOR THE RESIDENTS.  
AND OUR NEIGHBORHOODS THAT THEY

WOULD HAVE TO PUT UP WITH SOME  
BLIGHT.

AND DEAL WITH THAT BECAUSE WE  
HAVE BAD PLAYERS WHO WANT TO BE  
BAD NEIGHBORS.

I'LL COME BACK TO SOME OF THE  
PROPERTIES IN MY DISTRICT.

THERE ARE SOME PROPERTIES LIKE  
THE HOTEL ALEXANDRA WHICH HAS A  
STOREFRONT ON THE GROUND FLOOR  
BUT HAS BEEN VACANT FOR AS LONG  
AS I CAN REMEMBER.

I'M NOT SURE I EVER REMEMBER IN  
MY LIFETIME.

SO IS THAT ON YOUR RADAR AND  
WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THAT?

I'VE HEARD OVER TIME THAT  
PERHAPS SOMEONE'S INTERESTED IN  
BUYING, THEN THE DEAL FALLS  
THROUGH, WHAT IS HAPPENING  
THERE.

EVEN THE COMMERCIAL SPACE ON THE  
GROUND FLOOR COULD USE SOME SORT  
OF A FACELIFT BUT I'M NOT SURE  
THAT IT IS CONSIDERED PART OF  
EITHER THE MAIN STREET OR  
WASHINGTON GATEWAY, KIND OF LOST  
THERE IN THE MIDDLE.

ANYBODY HAVE UPDATES ON THAT  
PIECE OF PROPERTY?

>> COUNCILOR, THANK YOU FOR THE  
QUESTION.

YES, I AM NOT OLD ENOUGH TO  
REMEMBER.

IT IS A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING,  
HOWEVER, WITH GREAT  
ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES AND I CAN  
ONLY WISH TO SEE IT MAYBE  
ACTIVATED AGAIN IN OUR LIFETIME.  
HOWEVER, IT IS ONE OF THOSE  
PROPERTIES THAT THEY PAY THEIR  
TAXES, THEY ARE ACTIVE ON THE  
FIRST FLOOR AND RUN IT.

WE ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS, VERY  
RECENTLY WE HOSTED DEVELOPMENT  
TEAM THAT HAD APPROACHED THEM TO  
BUY THE PROPERTY.

AT THIS POINT, COUNCILOR, THE  
CITY FEELS THAT WHAT WE WERE  
PRESENTED WAS OUT OF SCALE FOR  
WHAT THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS THAT  
THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO  
SUPPORT.

AND PART OF THAT, DEVELOPMENT

SAW THE ACQUISITION PRICE HAD TO BE SUSTAINED BY A MASSIVE DEVELOPMENT.

WITHOUT RENDERING AN OFFICIAL CITY DECISION, WE GAVE THEM A FAIL FOR LOCATION, FOR THE TYPE OF THING THAT THEY'RE TRYING TO PRESENT AND WE'LL SAY TO THEM, WHETHER WE'VE HEARD FROM NEIGHBORHOOD ON THOSE TOPICS, ON SCALE, AND THAT SCALE WAS A LITTLE BIT MUCH, MAYBE THREE TIMES ANY BUILDING IN THAT AREA. >> I APPRECIATE YOU BRINGING IT UP BECAUSE THAT BRINGS ME TO MY NEXT POINT.

WHAT I HAVE FOUND CERTAINLY IN ROXBURY I'M SURE IN OTHER PARTS. CITY, THAT PEOPLE ARE HOLDING ON TO PROPERTIES HOPING FOR SOME BIG PAYDAY, WHETHER IT'S HIGHER RENT THAT THEY CAN CHARGE OR TO SELL THE PROPERTY OUTRIGHT. AND IN THE INTERIM PEOPLE ARE FORCED TO DEAL WITH THE BLIGHT. SO I CAN JUST HOLD ON TO THIS, THERE IS AN EMPTY LOT ON CORNER OF LAWRENCE STREET AND ST. JAMES THAT HAS BEEN -- USED TO BE A CHURCH THERE, I DO REMEMBER THAT.

THAT HAS BEEN GONE FOR DECADES NOW.

YOU HAVE PEOPLE WHO LOOK AT THAT PROPERTY AND SAY, YES, WE'D LIKE TO BUY IT OR MAYBE WE BOUGHT IT NOW WE HAVE TO DEVELOP IT.

IN DOING THEIR PLANS ARE SO MASSIVE WITH SO MUCH DENSITY, NONE OF THE NEIGHBORS LIKE IT BUT THEN THEY'RE SAYING ONLY WAY TO DO IT AND MAKE THE NUMBERS WORK TO DO THIS BIG BUILDING. NEIGHBORS ARE BEING FORCED TO LIVE WITH THE BLIGHT OF THE EMPTY LOT FOR ANOTHER COUPLE OF DECADES OR TO HAVE SOME MONSTROSITY OF A BUILDING THAT NONE ONE WANTS AND IT'S BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE ALOUND TO SIT ON VACANT LOT, ON THESE VACANT BUILDING I JUST FIND IT VERY PROBLEMATIC.

COMING BACK TO THE MOVEMENT THAT

IS HAPPENING WITH BOLDEN, THE CORNER STOREFRONT HAS BEEN EMPTY SINCE IT WAS DEVELOPED AND REVITALIZED GREAT TO SEE THAT THERE'S SOME MOVEMENT THERE. BUT ALL OF THESE OTHER EMPTY STOREFRONTS ALONG WASHINGTON STREET AND DO YOU HAVE A SENSE OF, IS THE ISSUE -- ARE WE COLLECTING DATA IS THE ISSUE HIGH RENT, HOLDING OUTED FOR THAT PAYDAY.

WHAT I HEAR IS THAT PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR WHATEVER THIS NEW DAY IS GOING TO LOOK LIKE IN TERMS OF -- PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT, FOR EXAMPLE, GETTING DONE, THAT IS GOING TO BE THE XAVIER OF DUDLEY SQUARE AND ROXBURY. I DON'T NECESSARILY LOOK FOR OUTSIDERS TO COME IN AND SAVE OUR COMMUNITIES.

I THINK WE'VE GOT A LOT OF TALENT, A LOT OF GOOD STRONG BUSINESSES.

BUT IT IS VERY CONCERNING TO SEE THAT THE NUMBER OF EMPTY STOREFRONTS, I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT FITS ON YOUR MAIN STREETS NUMBER YOU DIDN'T MENTION IT. BUT WONDERED IF YOU HAVE A SENSE OF, IS IT TOO HIGH RENT FOR BUSINESSES THAT WANT TO COME, IS IT THAT PEOPLE ARE JUST SITTING ON IT AND WAITING FOR THE DAY WHEN THEY THINK IT WILL BE PROFITABLE TO EITHER RENT IT OUT OR SELL IT.

WHAT IS YOUR SENSE?

>> GREAT QUESTION.

I DO WANT TO -- FROM ARE SOME COMPLEXITIES, WE LOOK AT THIS ALL THE TIME AND PART OF THE COMPLEXITY IS OWNERSHIP.

THE FORMER HOTEL YOU JUST MENTIONED ON WASHINGTON STREET IS IN FACT OWNED BY AN INSTITUTION.

IT'S A PRETTY WEALTHY CHURCH. WHAT YOU AND I THINK IS LONG FOR THEM IS VERY SHORT.

THE VACANCY IN DUDLEY HAS A HODGE-PODGE OF OWNERSHIP. THE ONE THAT IS A SET OF I THINK

FOUR EMPTY STOREFRONTS RIGHT UP  
FRONT OF THE GOLDEN BUILDING  
WHERE THAT RESTAURANT IS GOING.  
IN RESEARCH WE FOUND THAT IS  
OWNED BY -- OWNED BY A PORTFOLIO  
OF PROPERTIES THAT PEOPLE BIAS  
PART OF AN INVESTMENT.  
SO THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF  
PROPERTIES, FOR EXAMPLE, THE  
BUILDING THAT WE BOUGHT IN THE  
CORNER OF THE CITY WAS OWNED BY  
A COMPANY THAT OWNS BANK  
PROPERTY.  
THE CITY DOING DUE DILIGENCE  
FOUND THAT IT WAS ABOUT TO  
CLOSE, DISSOLVE AND THEY WERE  
GOING TO SELL.  
WE PUT OUR HANDS UP.  
THAT IS NOT HAPPENING IN FACT.  
WHAT THE REACH DO THEY OWN IT,  
EVERY HAS A DIFFERENT INVESTMENT  
STYLE.  
THIS ONE OWNS IT IS OWNING IT  
HAS MORE SPECULATIVE SORT OF  
APPROACH FOR THE FACT VALUE OF  
THE PROPERTY.  
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE LOCAL  
MARKET.  
VERSUS THE REVENUE THAT WOULD  
COME FROM RENTING.  
GOT EMPTY STOREFRONTS.  
THERE ARE COUPLE OF FAMILIES WHO  
OWN AND HAVE OWNED FOR A LONG  
TIME IN DUDLEY THAT WE'RE  
TALKING TO TO SEE IF THEY CAN  
USE MORE FINANCING TO HELP THEM  
INVEST IN THEIR CURRENT  
BUILDINGS.  
WE'VE HAD TWO MEETINGS NOW WITH  
CURRENT OWNERS IN DUDLEY TO SEE  
HOW THE CITY CAN HELP MESH  
CAPITAL WITH THEIR INVESTMENT  
SORT OF GOALS.  
IT WAS  
TYPES OF OWNERSHIP MODELS.  
SOME OF THEM ARE GENERATIONAL  
OWNERS IN DUDLEY.  
OTHERS ARE MORE NUANCED.  
THEY'RE NEW.  
THEY'RE COMING IN.  
THEY'RE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT  
WHAT'S GOING ON.  
THE DUDLEY OFFICE -- SMALL  
OFFICE SPACE RIGHT NOW IS

RENTING BETWEEN NEW ONES  
RENOVATED RENTING BETWEEN \$25  
AND 30.  
AND IT TAKES OUT AT LOT OF FOLKS  
WHO ARE CURRENTLY IN DUDLEY.  
AND THE SMALL BUSINESS SPACE IS  
TRYING TO MATCH THE OFFICE  
NUMBERS --

>> CAN I ASK A CLARIFYING  
QUESTION.

SO THE 25 TO \$30 A SQUARE  
FOOT -- PER SQUARE FOOT, HOW  
DOES THAT COMPARE TO OTHER  
COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT  
THE CITY?

>> OTHER -- SOME OTHER --  
NOT INCLUDING DOWNTOWN.  
RIGHT.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD ONES.  
O THE NEIGHBORHOOD ONES, YOU  
CAN'T GET THAT AMOUNT OF PAN.  
YOU CAN'T GET THAT DOWN THE  
STREET.

YOU CAN'T GET THAT IF A LOT OF  
THE PLACES.

BUT IN FACT -- IN OTHER PLACES,  
THAT'S GOOD.

RIGHT?

IT'S NOT BAD.

IN OTHER PLACES YOU'RE SEEING 30  
TO 40.

>> I'D BE INTERESTED IN HAVING  
THAT DATA.

I HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS, BUT  
I WANT TO BE MINDFUL THAT I HAVE  
OTHER COLLEAGUES HERE THAT HAVE  
QUESTIONS.

I'D BE INTERESTED IN TERMS OF  
FOLLOW-UP IF YOU COULD GET THAT  
INFORMATION TO ME.

ABOUT THE RENT.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR JANEY.  
COUNCILOR FLAHERTY.

>> THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

IT'S PROBABLY BEST TO SHARE  
BECAUSE I HAVE A REPORT HERE,  
THE REMS INVENTORY STUDY.  
COULD YOU JUST TAKE ME THROUGH  
THIS BASICALLY FOUR CATEGORIES  
BUT PLANNING, RESEARCH UNDER  
CONSIDERATION, ACTIVE  
DISPOSITION, ON HOLD, INACTIVE,  
AND THERE'S A TOTAL OF 1,251.  
CAN YOU JUST KIND OF TAKE ME

THROUGH EACH ONE OF THOSE  
CATEGORIES.

>> SURE.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN  
ACTIVE?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HONLD?  
I GUESS WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR IS  
WE WANT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE AS  
FULLY TRANSPARENT AS POSSIBLE.  
SO WE WANT NOTICE TO MAKE SURE  
THE PROCESS IS FAIR AND OPEN.  
WE ALSO WANT TO PREDICTABILITY  
FOR THE COMMUNITY.

THERE'S ALSO THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
ACQUIRE THESE PROPERTIES AS TO  
WHAT THEY CAN AND CANNOT DO  
PROBABLY TO COUNCILOR JANEY'S  
POINT THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME  
FOLKS THAT ARE OUT THERE SITTING  
ON THINGS, HOLDING BACK,  
THINKING THAT IT'S THIS AMOUNT  
OF GOLD MINE AND QUITE FRANKLY,  
THAT'S NOT HOW TO WORKS.

BUT -- AND ALSO DEFINE START AND  
A DEFINE FINISH TO THE PROCESS  
SO THAT WE CAN TRY TO TRANSITION  
THESE PARCELS AS QUICKLY AND  
KIND OF I GUESS PUT THEM TO  
WORK.

YOU WILL, OR PUT THEM NO GOOD  
USE IN THE COMMUNITY.

AGAIN, IT COULD BE A RESIDENTIAL  
UNIT.

IT COULD BE A COMMERCIAL UNIT.

IT COULD BE OPEN SPACE.

IT COULD BE A RK PAG LOT FOR  
NEIGHBORHOODS THAT NEED  
ADDITIONAL PARKING.

SO.

YOU COULD MAYBE GIVE ME A SENSE  
OF WHAT IT DOES IT MEAN TO BE IN  
EACH ONE OF THOSE CATEGORIES,  
THAT WOULD BE GREAT.

>> SURE.

MY PLEASURE, COUNCILOR.

SO PLANNING RESEARCH UNDER  
CONSIDERATION IS FIRST.

AND THAT NUMBER IS LARGE BUT  
IT'S REALLY MAINLY MADE UP OF  
TWO, THREE AREAS OF THE CITY.  
IT'S -- SO THE FIRST THING WE DO  
WHEN WE DECIDE TO -- WE WANT TO  
DISPOSE OF THESE PARCELS, WE  
START LOOKING AT THE

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS.  
WE START UNDERSTANDING THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD, ZONING.  
WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS?  
WHAT ARE THE ASSETS?  
WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES WITH A  
TICK SITE?  
AND WE START DOING A LOT OF  
INTERNAL ANALYSIS.  
SOME OF THAT IN -- FOR SOME OF  
YOU KNOW WE'RE BUILDING A LOT OF  
NEW HOMES IN THE CITY ON SMALLER  
LOTS, AND SO PART OF THAT WORK  
IS LOOKING AT THE ARCHITECTURAL  
FEATURES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD AND  
THE AFFORDABILITY AND ALL OF  
THAT.  
SO THAT'S -- SO THAT CATEGORY IS  
WHERE WE'RE DOING A LOT OF THE  
RESEARCH.  
OF THAT 458 IS MADE UP OF GROWTH  
THAT WE'VE OWN FOR DECADES.  
AND SO WE'RE GOING TO DISPOSE OF  
THE GROVE.  
WE'RE GOING TO DO IT.  
IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT.  
AND COME TO FIND OUT THE WAY  
THAT THE ROADS WERE LAID OUT IS  
SO NARROW, YOU COULDN'T GET A  
FIRE TRUCK DOWN THEM.  
SO NOW 200 LOTS, THEY'RE VERY,  
VERY NARROW.  
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN DESIGNED IN  
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY FOR ROW  
HOUSES.  
SO NOW WE'RE LOOKING AT, OKAY,  
TO WIDEN THE ROADS, WE HAVE TO  
EMANANT DOMAIN TAKING, SO WE'RE  
HIRING OUTSIDE PERSON TO HELP US  
RETHINK THAT THROUGH.  
BUT THAT'S KIND OF THE WORK  
WE'RE DOING BEHIND THE SCENES  
BEFORE WE'RE GOING OUT TO THE  
COMMUNITY AND SAYING, WE'RE  
READY TO HAVE A CONVERSATION  
ABOUT THIS POSITION.  
>> OKAY.  
ACTIVE DISPOSITION MEANS THAT  
WE'VE DONE OUR HOMEWORK AND WE  
ARE NOW WORKING WITH THE  
COMMUNITY.  
AND WE ARE GOING OUT AND WE'RE  
SAYING, THIS -- THESE ARE THE  
SITES WE'D LIKE TO DISPOSE OF.



WE'VE ALL BEEN TO THESE MEETINGS.  
THIS IS OUR BEST THINKING ON THIS.  
WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU.  
AND IT'S -- I WILL SAY THERE'S VERY FEW -- WELL, THERE'S A FEW, BUT THERE'S VERY FEW PROCESSES NOW THAT ARE CONTENTIOUS.  
WE'RE TALKING TO NEIGHBORHOODS, DESIGN, DENSITY, AFFORDABILITY LEVELS, INFORMING THEM ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE PARCELS. ARE THEY CONTAMINATED? WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO CLEAN THEM UP?  
THAT KIND OF THING.  
WE MEET EVERY TWO -- INTERNALLY EVERY TWO WEEKS.  
STAFF HAVE GOT TO MAKE PROGRESS ON THOSE PARCELS OR THEY'RE IN THE HOT SEAT.  
AND SO I KNOW EXACTLY USING DATA WHERE THEY ALL ARE.  
128 ARE IN COMMUNITY PROCESS.  
18 ARE IN RFPs RIGHT NOW.  
43 ARE IN ISSUE, SO ON, SO ON.  
SOME OF THE DELAY IN THIS CATEGORY IS, IF A COMMUNITY -- AND MANY DO -- REALLY WANT TO SEE OUR SITES USED TO CREATE AFFORDABILITY HOUSING, THEN THEY HAVE TO GO AROUND AND GET THE RESOURCES TO DO THAT.  
SO THEY'RE COMING TO US.  
THEY'RE COMING TO THE STATE.  
THEY'RE COMING TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.  
THEY'RE GOING TO FOUNDATIONS.  
AND THAT CAN TAKE A COUPLE OF YEARS, BUT WE'RE PATIENT.  
WE WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY.  
WE DESIGNATE A DEVELOPER AND THEN IT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME TO LINE UP THE RESOURCES TO GET INTO CONSTRUCTION.  
SO WE HAVE 417 PARCELS RIGHT NOW IN THAT CATEGORY THAT ARE ACTIVELY BEING WORKED ON WITH THE COMMUNITY OR IN DEVELOPERS.  
I'M HOLD AS I MENTIONED EARLIER WE DON'T HAVE A GOOD HOME FOR THOSE.

THOSE ARE SITES THAT WE WOULD NEVER BUILD ON. THEY'RE PART OF OUR TREE CANOPY. COMMUNITIES LOVE THEM. WE MAINTAIN THEM BECAUSE THEY NEVER GET FREE OF TRASH OR ANYTHING BUT THOSE ARE ONES WE PROBABLY NEVER DEVELOP. THE VAST MAJORITY ARE URBAN WILD.

THEN WE HAVE AN INACTIVE CATEGORY.

WE EITHER HAVEN'T GOTTEN TO IT YET JUST BECAUSE WE'RE TRYING TO MOVE THE 800 THAT I MENTIONED OR NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE ASKED US TO PUT THEM ON HOLD.

THEY'VE GOT '11 OR THEY'RE VERY CONTAMINATED AND WE'RE TRYING TO GET THE FEDERAL FUNDS AND STATE FUNDS TO CLEAN THEM UP.

>> OKAY.

AND THEN FROM THE NOTICE TO ABUTT, I ASSUME IF YOU'RE LIVING NEXT DOOR OR ACROSS THE STREET OR AROUND THE CORNER , FOLKS MAY HAVE AN INTEREST AND THEY PROBABLY INQUIRE PRETTY REGULARLY, HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THIS PARCEL?

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THIS PARCEL?

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THIS PARCEL?

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THAT PARCEL?

[ LAUGHTER ]

SO IT'S GOING ON FOR A LONG TIME.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT LINE OF COMMUNICATION IS WHEN THEY REACH OUT TO YOUR DEPARTMENT AND WHO'S COMMUNICATING BACK TO THE FOLKS THATRY SAG, IT'S INACTIVE.

IT'S ON HOLD.

IT'S IN DISPOSITION.

WHENER, READ TO GO WE'RE NOTIFYING DIRECT ABUTTERS IT'S OPEN AND AVAILABLE AND --

>> YES.

ANYONE WHO CALLS OR EXPRESSES AN INTEREST AND SOMETIMES IT'S NOT A PRIORITY BUT IT IS THEIRS, AND WE DO, IF WE HEAR FROM A LOT

OF THE PEOPLE, WE TRY TO ELEVATE  
THOSE PARCELS AND GET THEM INTO  
THE ACTIVE DISPOSITION CATEGORY.  
WE DO TAKE REALLY -- WE TAKE  
VERY GOOD INFORMATION ON WHO'S  
CALLING.

WE HAVE A COUPLE OF PEOPLE THAT  
DO -- THAT REALLY IS THEIR TASK,  
AND THEN WHEN THERE'S ANY  
MOVEMENT, THEY HAVE THEIR EMAIL  
ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS AND  
REACH OUT TO THEM DIRECTLY.

IT'S GOOD.

IT'S GOOD.

ONCE IN A WHILE, SOMEONE WILL  
SAY, I DIDN'T HEAR BUT THEY MAY  
HAVE MOVED, ETC.

I THINK ONE OF OUR BIGGEST  
CHALLENGES IS YEARS AGO, THE  
CITY USED TO MAKE A LOT OF THE  
LAND AVAILABLE FOR OPEN SPACE,  
SIDE YARDS.

AND THEY WERE BIG LOTS.

THEY WERE BIG SITES.

AND -- 6, 7,000 SQUARE FEET.

AND PEOPLE WOULD STILL LIKE TO  
SEE THAT HAPPEN BUT IF WE HAD  
REALLY BEAUTIFUL FLAT LOTS RIGHT  
NOW, WE MAY BE ABLE TO GIVE A  
PIECE OF IT, BUT REALLY NEED  
OUR LOTS TO DEVELOP BLUE  
HOUSING, TASTEFUL, GOOD  
AFFORDABILITY LEVELS, BUT WE TO  
LONGER CAN SELL VERY LARGE  
PARCELS.

THE CITY'S JUST NOT BIG ENOUGH.

WE NEED HOUSING.

SO WE DO TRY TO WORK WITH THEM  
TO MAKE SURE THAT IF THEY NEED A  
DRIVEWAY OR THEY NEED EASEMENT  
OR THEY NEED A PIECE OF THE LOT,  
THAT WE'RE ACCOMMODATING.

>> VERY GOOD.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

>> SURE.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

COUNCILOR

FLAHERTY.

COUNCILOR CIOMMO.

>> THANK YOU.

SPOOF I WAS JUST GOING TO  
FOLLOW UP ON THE 400 AND 5  
PROPERTY.

DID YOU SAY THEY WERE ALL MAIN

STREETS DISTRICTS?

>> OH, NO.

THAT'S --

EY'RE JUST PARCELS  
THROUGHOUT THE CITY.

>> OKAY.

WE HAVE VERY FEW SITE, WE  
HAVE VERY FEW.

>> OKAY.

THE REASON I BRING THAT UP IS  
FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS AND I  
WANT TO RECOGNIZE ALI CARTER,  
OUR FORMER BRIGHTON MAIN STREET  
DIRECTOR, THERE WERE TWO VERY  
PROMINENT PARCEL -- PROPERTIES,  
COMMERCIAL RETAIL PROPERTIES,  
ONE RIGHT ON MARKET, CHET NUT  
HILL -- CHESNUTT HILL.

USED TO BE -- CHESNUTT HILL.

USED TO BE KIND OF A LANDMARK,  
RECENTLY HAS A TENANT.

WHAT HAPPENED WAS CABLOOM GHUZ  
THERE, NATIONAL RETAIL.

THEY WENT OUT OF BUSINESS IN A  
COUPLE OF YEARS BUT THEY HAD  
LIKE A TEN-YEAR LEASE.

SO THE PROPERTY OWNER IS GETTING  
RENT.

HOW MANY OF THE POTENTIAL 405  
ARE ACTUALLY LEASED THAT THE  
LANDLORD IS GETTING THE BEST OF  
BOTH WORLDS, NO TENANTS BUT  
GETTING RENT EVERY MONTH FOR TEN -- POSSIBLY TEN YEARS?  
AND NOT JUST THAT SPACE BUT NEXT  
TO WINSHIP SPA ALSO, A PROMINENT  
LOCATION ACROSS FROM THE POLICE  
STATION RECENTLY GOT CAFEERÉ NERO,  
SO IT'S KIPD OF IRONIC THAT -- I  
CAME HERE WITH THOSE TWO PLACES  
IN MIND AND NOW THEY'RE ACTUALLY  
TENTATIVE.

SO --

>> DO WE HAVE ANY DATA --

NO, I KNOW IT HAPPENS.

WE DON'T HAVE ANY DATAEN TO  
THAT.

WE'D REALLY HAVE TO THINK ABOUT  
HOW --

>> I MEAN, I THINK THAT -- I

THINK IT'S -- YOU KNOW,

SOMETHING TO PURSUE AND ONE OF  
THE THINGS THAT WAS GREAT ABOUT  
HAVING MAIN STREETS IS THOSE  
PARTICULAR PROPERTIES ACTUALLY

HAD -- WHAT'S THAT YOU PUT ON  
THE WINDOW RATHER THAN PAPER BAG --  
[ OFF-MIC ]

>> YEAH, DECALS SO IT DIDN'T  
LOOK VACANT OR AS VACANT AS IT  
COULD AND IT DIDN'T CERTAINLY  
LOOK BLIGHTED, AND I THINK, YOU  
KNOW, THERE SHOULD BE  
DISTINCTION.

I'M ALSO THINKING OF CHARLES  
VIEW.

WE OPEN TO LOW-INCOME FOLKS JUST  
THREE, FOUR YEARS AGO NOW.  
THERE'S STILL VACANT RETAIL  
SPACE THERE.

I DON'T KNOW IF THEY'RE JUST  
ASKING TOO MUCH RENT, BUT  
LITERALLY, IT'S BEEN VACANT ON  
WESTERN AVENUE FOR YEARS AGAIN.  
SO I THINK IT'S A COMPLEX  
PROBLEM, BUT I ALSO THINK THERE  
SHOULD BE A DISTINCTION.  
IF SOMEBODY'S GETTING RENT,  
KEEPING THEIR PROPERTY UP, BUT  
THEY'RE GETTING RENT, IT'S  
LEASED, THEY REALLY MAY NOT EVEN  
HAVE THE RIGHT TO SUBLET IT, IF  
YOU WILL.

>> RIGHT.

JUST THROWING THAT OUT THERE.  
I DIDN'T KNOW CHARLES STREET  
STILL HAS SOME VAGUANT SPACES.  
BUT I WILL -- I WILL CHECK ON  
WITH THE OWNER ON THAT AND WHAT  
THEIR PROCESS HAS BEEN AND WHAT  
THE RENTS ARE.

I'LL GET BACK TO YOU ON THAT.  
I'M UNHAPPY TO HEAR THAT AS  
WELL.

>> YEAH.

AND THE THING IS THAT THERE'S  
NUMEROUS OTHER RETAILER  
ESTABLISHMENTS POPPING UP ,  
MOSTLY HARVARD-OWNED PROPERTIES.

>> TRADER JOE'S.

, FATHER'S DELI.

THERE'S A LOT OF GOOD STUFF  
HAPPENING ON WESTERN OF A.  
AND IT -- WESTERNAV.  
IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE MOVING  
DOWN THAT END WHERE THE PEOPLE  
ARE.

>> FWIMS AND I'M NOT GOING TO  
SPEAK FOR THE BPDA.

SOMETIMES MAYBEHOODS WILL SAY WE WANT COMMERCIAL ON THE FIRST FLOOR AND RESIDENTIAL ABOVE. SOMETIMES I THINK WE CREATE TOO MUCH COMMERCIAL, ESPECIALLY IF THERE'S NOT ENOUGH FOOT TRAFFIC. SO WE HAVE TO BE MINDFUL OF THAT.

BUT I WILL CHECK ON CHARLES STREET.

>> THANK WU MR. CHAIR.

-- THANK YOU, MR. CHAIR.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR CIOMMO. WE'LL DO ANOTHER ROUND OF QUESTIONS.

COUNCILOR O'MALLEY.

>> THREE MINUTES.

I LIKE IT.

VERY BRIEFLY BECAUSE I DO WANT DO GET INTO OUR SECOND PANEL. IN 2008, WHICH I DON'T -- YOU WERE HERE IN 2008, COUNCILOR CIOMMO AND I THINK YOU MAY HAVE BEEN.

THE COUNCIL PASSED.

>> I WASN'T HERE.

EITHER.

SO IN 2008, THERE WAS A -- I'M NOT A LAWYER BUT I'M NOT ALWAYS ASKED THE QUESTIONS I KNOW THE ANSWER TO.

SO IN 2008, THE -- MAYOR MENINO AUTHORED AND THE CITY COUNCIL PASSED A VACANT PROPERTY DISCLOSURE.

>> YES.

THANK YOU.

YES.

SO BUT THAT IS FOR RESIDENTIAL UNITS NOT COMMERCIAL.

CORRECT?

>> I'D HAVE TO GO BACK --

YES.

CAN WE ADD COMMERCIAL?

THE PURPOSE THAT I'M ASKING HERE IS I FEEL LIKE WE MAY HAVE SOME TOOLS ON THE BOOKS.

AND RATHER THAN REINVENTING THE WHEEL, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE OTHER THINGS I'D LIKE TO DO BUT AT A MINIMUM, I THINK THAT WE NEED TO SEE ABOUT INCLUDING -- IS AND IT MAY TAKE AN ACT OF THIS BODY --

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY.  
THAT WAS DONE A LITTLE  
DIFFERENTLY.  
IT WAS A FORECLOSURE CRISIS.  
IT WAS TO GET AHEAD OF THINGS.  
BUT THIS IS A LITTLE BIT  
DIFFERENTLY SO WE CAN HAVE A  
MASTER LIST.  
I WOULD ARGUE AS WE TALK ABOUT  
DATA COLLECTION, WHILE THIS IS  
ALL HELPFUL, YOU HAVE A CERTAIN  
LIST.  
BFD HAS A LIST.  
ISD HAS A LIST.  
I'D RATHER HAVE A MORE  
COMPREHENSIVE WAY TO ADDRESS IT.  
SO I GUESS THAT WOULD BE THE  
FIRST ONE.  
AND THEN SECONDLY, DO YOU --  
COMMISSIONER, AS RELATES TO  
ASSESSING, WHEN WE'VE GOT -- SO  
BASICALLY THERE ARE TWO PROPERTY  
TAX -- CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG.  
AS I UNDERSTAND IT NOT EXCLUDING  
DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES BUT YOU  
MAY PROPERTY TAXES ON YOUR HOME  
IF YOU LIVE THERE AND CLAIM THE  
RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION, IT'S  
USUALLY PROBABLY 30 TO 40% LESS  
THAN IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE THAT.  
AND THOSE ARE BASICALLY THE TWO  
MAIN CATEGORIES.  
NOW, IN AN EARLIER BUDGET  
HEARING, I BELIEVE YOU HAD A  
STATISTIC WHICH FLOORED ME I  
THINK IT'S MILLENNIUM TOWER,  
TWO-THIRDS OF THE RESIDENTS  
THERE DON'T EMPLOY THE  
RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION.  
>> I DIDN'T HAVE THAT.  
SORRY.  
IT WASN'T ME.  
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ASSESSING.  
>> IT MAY HAVE BEEN.  
DON'T THINK WE DID TALK  
ABOUT IT.  
BUT, YES, I THINK THOSE NUMBERS  
ARE PRETTY ACCURATE.  
>> AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY.  
SO IS THERE ANY WAY -- SO  
OBVIOUSLY, THESE ARE  
INVESTMENTS.  
THIS IS A VERY SAFE INVESTMENT  
IF YOU CAN AFFORD IT.

THE PROPERTY VALUE WILL  
APPRECIATE.

THERE AS LOT OF FOREIGN  
INVESTORS.

AND AGAIN, THAT'S EVERYONE'S  
GOD-GIVEN RIGHT.

BUT I WONDER HAS THERE BEEN ANY  
CONVERSATION ABOUT EXERTING AN  
ADDITIONAL FEE ON TOP OF THAT?  
BECAUSE WE ARE PAYING FOR IT  
WITH THE HOUSING STOCK.

WE ARE PAYING FOR IT IN THE  
BUSINESS SENSE WITH OTHER LOCAL  
BUSINESSES WHICH ARE HINDERED  
FOR GROWTH.

DO YOU KNOW IF ASSESSING HAS  
LOOKED AT WAYS TO SORT OF  
ADDRESS FOREIGN INVESTMENT FOR  
OUR HOUSING?

>> NO, WE HAVEN'T.

I MEAN, WE'RE MAINLY FOCUSED ON  
VALUE.

ANYTHING BEYOND WHAT WOULD BE  
MARKET VALUE IS SOMETHING WE  
COULDN'T ADD ON TO THE TAX BILL.

I THINK THE OTHER THING IS,  
ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE THESE FOREIGN  
INVESTORS, THEY'RE OFTEN NOT  
PULLING ANY CITY SERVICES SO  
THEY'RE NOT PUTTING KIDS IN  
SCHOOL.

THEY'RE NOT PUTTING TRASH OUT.  
THEY'RE NOT USING ANY CITY  
SERVICES.

SO I DON'T THINK IT'S A TOTAL  
LOSS ON NOT HAVING PEOPLE LIVING  
IN THESE UNITS EITHER.

>> WELL, I APPRECIATE THAT.

I WOULD SAY AND THIS IS LESS  
ABOUT THOSE UNITS BUT THE VACANT -- THERE WAS A FIRE IN A  
VACANT UNIT IN WEST ROXBURY  
WHERE KIDS ARE GOING -- SO THERE  
IS A COST THAT EVEN INACTION AND  
LACK OF PEOPLE, THERE IS A COST  
THERE.

AND IF WE DON'T DICTATE TAX  
POLICY BASED ON CHILDREN GOING  
TO SCHOOL OR NOT OR OTHER  
THINGS, HOW MUCH TRASH YOU THROW  
OUT, SO I APPRECIATE THE POINT,  
BUT I DO THINK THAT IT'S A  
CONVERSATION WE SHOULD HAVE AT  
SUBSEQUENT WORKING SESSIONS FROM  
THIS SO THAT'S ALL FOR THIS



ROUND.

I DO WANT TO HEAR FROM OUR  
PANEL.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR  
O'MALLEY.

COUNCILOR CAMPBELL?

>> FOLLOWING UP ON THE 2008  
ORDINANCE, OBVIOUSLY, THAT'S  
STILL ON THE BOOKS.

WHO IS DOING ANYTHING WITH THAT  
WHEN IT COMES TO VACANT AND  
FORECLOSED LOTS?

ARE WE STILL REQUIRING  
REGISTRATION, STILL REQUIRING A  
FEE, TRACKING THOSE UNITS?

>> FORECLOSURES.

RIGHT?

>> AND IF NOT, I THINK IT'S --  
WE HAVE THE FORECLOSURE  
PROGRAM WE'RE AWARE OF I'M NOT  
AWARE OF IT BEING A VACANCY  
PROGRAM.

I'LL LOOK INTO IT AND GET BACK  
TO THE COUNCIL BUT TO MY  
KNOWLEDGE IT'S ALL FORECLOSURE  
AND WE DO KEEP A LIST OF THAT.

>> THAT MIGHT BE ONE THING IN  
THE TOOL KIT, ONE THING WE MIGHT  
BE ABLE TO ACVATE THAT AND THEN  
PULL IN THE SMALL BUSINESS  
PROPERTIES.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

ND WE CAN TALK ABOUT THAT  
SUBSEQUENTLY.

THANK YOU, COMMISSIONER.

AND THEN IN TERMS OF DATA  
COLLECTION, HAVE WE THOUGHT  
ABOUT PARTNERING WITH SOME OF  
LOCAL UNIVERSITIES?

I KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE'S  
SOME M.I.T. STUDENTS  
SOMEWHERE -- THEY'RE BACK THERE.  
HELLO -- WHO ARE WORKING ON THIS  
VERY ISSUE AND ARE FOCUSED ON  
THIS IN WANTING TO LOOK AT  
DIFFERENT DISTRICTS.

I AM TALKING WITH THE WENTWORTH  
STUDENTS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN  
THIS.

SO JUST CURIOUS IF THE  
ADMINISTRATION IS TALKING TO  
UNIVERSITIES AND IF NOT, I THINK  
THAT'S ANOTHER WAY FOR US TO

GIVE -- I THINK MAYBE THE HUMAN CAPITAL RESEARCH AND WHATEVER ELSE WE DON'T HAVE TO ASSIST WITH SOME OF THIS DATA COLLECTION.

>> I WOULD WELCOME IT. WE ALWAYS HAVE VERY -- VERY -- WE'RE SURROUNDED BY VERY, VERY WONDERFUL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, AND WE ALWAYS HAVE A LOT WORKING ON VARIOUS PROJECTS.

THIS IS A VERY GOOD PROJECT.

>> AND I THINK IT WOULD BE GREAT, BECAUSE EVEN IF WE -- IT'S GOING TO TAKE MORE TIME, OBVIOUSLY, WITH THE PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTIES.

MIGHT BE EASIER WITH MOORE COMMERCIAL SPACES BECAUSE OF WHAT THE COMMERCIAL SPACES NEED TO OPERATE TO OPEN.

BUT FOR THE CITY-OWNED LIST OR THE CITY OWNED PARCELS, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT ARE INACTIVE, THAT WE COULD BE DOING SOMETHING WITH.

RIGHT?

>> YEAH.

I THINK THE INACTIVE ONES, I DO THINK WE HAVE A HANDLE ON PRETTY MUCH EVERY PARCEL.

I THINK IF YOU -- IF YOU SAY, OH, THAT HAS CROPPING, THAT HAS, WHATEVER, CONTAMINATION, I -- WE'VE BEEN USING COLEPIAND UNIVERSITIES EVERY SUMMER TO START DOING BUILDOUT SCENARIOS. AT LOT OF ARCHITECTURAL SCHOOLS.

SO WE DO USE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO HELP US, BUT --

>> NO, AND IT COULD BE -- SO, WHERE I WAS GOING WITH THAT WAS --

>> YEAH.

-- FOR THE CITY-OWNED PARCELS -- YEP.

-- OBVIOUSLY, WE HAVE DATA.

I'D LIKE TO SEE A CENTRALIZED IN SOME PLACE IN SORT OF MORE INFORMATION ATTACHED TO IT.

SO, FOR EXAMPLE, ALL OF THIS DATA IS VERY USEFUL.

BUT WHEN YOU PULL OUT THE

INACTIVE INFORMATION, I WOULD LOVE A RESIDENT IN MY DISTRICT TO BE ABLE TO GO ON THE CITY OF BOSTON'S WEBSITE, SOMEPLACE THAT IS TRANSPARENT AND OPEN, TO GO THROUGH AND TO FIND OUT ALL OF THE RESIDENTIAL LOTS THAT ARE CITY OWNED, START WITH WHAT WE HAVE, AND TO SEE WHERE IT IS, TO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH IT, IF IT'S CONTAMINATION, CONTAMINATION, HOW LONG IT'S BEEN VACANT, WHAT THE CITY IS DOING WITH RESPECT TO THAT. IT MIGHT BE SEEKING FUNDING FOR CONTAMINATION.

A REAL BREAKDOWN AND BREAKOUT IN A MASTER OR CENTRAL LOCATION WHERE SOMEONE FROM THE OUTSIDE COULD EASILY GET THIS INFORMATION.

AND I THINK WHERE THE UNIVERSITIES MIGHT ALSO BE USEFUL IS EXPANDING THIS TO INCLUDE THOSE LOTS AND PARCELS THAT WE KNOW TO BE VACANT BUT THAT ARE PRIVATELY OWNED AND MAY REQUIRE SOME MORE DIGGING AND RESEARCH.

AND THEN PUTTING THAT IN A CENTRALIZED PLACE.

BUT I DO THINK, IN THE SHORT TERM, THERE'S SOMETHING WE CAN DO WITH DATA WE HAVE ON THE CITY PARCELS THAT ARE VACANT IN A WAY THAT MAKES THAT LIST AND THAT INFORMATION TRANSPARENT AND THEN WE GO TO, OKAY, THEN HOW DO WE ADDRESS THE SOLUTION?

WHAT POSSIBLE ACTIVATION POP-UPS, WHATEVER ELSE, BUT RIGHT NOW IT DOESN'T LIVE ANYWHERE.

>> IT IS ON OUR WEBSITE.

OKAY.

I NEED TO GO BACK AND I WOULD ENCOURAGE -- I'LL WORK WITH YOUR STAFF --

>> YEAH.

TO SEE --

HOW DOES IT PRESENT ON THE WEBSITE?

>> IT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY -- EVERYTHING CAN BE IMPROVED BUT

THE INFORMATION IS THERE.  
IT'S INTERACTIVE.  
YOU CAN LOOK AT ALL -- WHERE WE  
ARE IN THE DISPOSITION PROCESS.  
I DON'T KNOW IF ALL THE -- THE  
INACTIVES ARE THERE.  
I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S -- THE  
DESCRIPTIONS THAT YOU'RE  
DESCRIBING SO EVERYTHING CAN  
ALWAYS BE ENHANCED AND IMPROVED  
BUT WE WORKED REALLY HARD IN THE  
LAST COUPLE YEARS TO BE MORE  
TRANSPARENT AND GIVE OUT  
INFORMATION.  
BUT I'M GLAD TO WORK WITH YOUR  
STAFF AND COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES TO SEE IF IT CAN'T  
BE EVEN MORE IMPROVED.  
>> IT IS USER FRIENDLY AND  
THERE'S SOME INFORMATION THAT  
ISN'T THERE AND I NO HE THAT  
BECAUSE --  
>> YEAH.  
TO FIND IT.  
YEAH.  
BUT WE KNOW IT EXISTS.  
SO HOW DO WE CREATE A SITE  
THAT'S USER FRIENDLY AND WHERE  
WE ARE WITH RESPECT TO WHAT  
WE'RE DOING WITH THOSE PARCELS.  
AND THEN LASTLY JUST FOCUSING ON -- AND OBVIOUSLY, WE'RE GOING  
TO HAVE ANOTHER CONVERSATION  
ABOUT THIS, BUT JUST FOCUSING ON  
THE PROBLEM PROPERTIES.  
CHRIS, I WANT TO PULL YOU IN,  
BECAUSE THIS IS SOMETIMES JUST A  
HEADACHE.  
AND THESE ARE PROPERTIES WHERE I  
CAN GO IN A NEIGHBORHOOD.  
I'LL BRING UP A SECTION OF MY  
DISTRICT.  
IT GETS FRUSTRATING TO TELL  
THOSE RESIDENTS, I'M SO SORRY,  
BUT THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.  
SO I THINK, ONE, HOW OFTEN DOES  
A PROBLEM PROPERTY -- DO YOU DO  
QUARTERLY REPORTING?  
THERE'S AN EXPECTATION IN THE  
ORDINANCE THAT THERE'S A  
QUARTERLY REPORT THAT COMES OUT.  
I DON'T KNOW THAT WE'VE SEEN IT.  
AND THEN HOW DO WE MAINTAIN  
BETTER RECORDS THAT ARE MORE  
PUBLIC FACING SO THAT, FOR

EXAMPLE, AT THE COMMON SQUARE MEETING THE OTHER NIGHT, WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET A PROPERTY ON THE PROBLEM PROPERTY TAX LIST. YOU KNOW, I EMAIL YOU, BUT NO ONE COULD GO ON ANYWHERE TO SAY, OH, IT ACTUALLY IS LISTED AS PROBLEM PROPERTIES.

BUT WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

WHAT DOES LISTING IT MEAN?

ARE WE ASSESSING -- WHAT -- WHAT PIECES OF THE PROBLEM PROPERTY TAX SOURCE ARE WE IMPLEMENTING WITH RESPECT TO THAT PROPERTY NOW THAT'S LISTED?

SO I'D LOVE FOR YOU TO ANSWER A FEW OF THOSE QUESTIONS.

>> SO WE MEET MONTHLY TO -- AT LEAST 14 DIFFERENT CITY AGENCIES FROM -- PRETTY MUCH MOST OF OUR FOLKS AT THIS TABLE, POLICE, FIRE, CODE ENFORCEMENT, AND REVIEW ALL OF THE PROPERTIES THAT ARE ACTIVELY EITHER ON OUR LIST OR UNDER INVESTIGATION.

>> THESE ARE PRIVATE MEETINGS. RIGHT.

CORRECT.

>> COULD THEY BE PUBLIC FACING? HAVE THOSE BEEN CONSIDERED? NOT NECESSARILY FOR PEOPLE THAT SORT OF CHIME IN.

LIKE WE HAVE COUNCIL MEETINGS. YOU CAN'T CAN TESTIFY DURING COUNCIL MEETINGS, BUT YOU CAN COME AND LISTEN.

RIGHT?

>> WE DO DISCUSS INFORMATION ABOUT CERTAIN PROPERTIES THAT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE PUBLIC INFORMATION BASED ON OWNERSHIP OR DETAILS OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY THAT'S HAPPENING THERE.

SO THERE IS SOME SENSITIVITY TO IT.

AS FAR AS CREATING SORT OF MORE PUBLIC FACING REPOSITORY FOR IT, WE ARE WORKING ON GETTING OUR LIST UPLOADED TO THE CITY'S WEBSITE WITH DETAILS ON WHAT'S DESIGNATED, WHAT'S BEEN REMOVED, WHO OWNS IT AND HOW LONG IT'S BEEN ON -- SO THAT'S ONGOING WORK.

HOPEFULLY WE'LL HAVE THAT DONE SHORTLY.

>> AND DO WE DO QUARTERLY REPORTS AS THEY'RE SORT OF MANDATED BY THE POLICY?

>> WE HAVE DONE QUARTERLY REPORTS IN THE PAST.

I BELIEVE WE ARE WORKING ON REORGANIZING HOW THOSE REPORTS ARE PRESENTED TO BOTH THE COUNCIL AND THE PUBLIC AS WELL. BUT I'D BE HAPPY TO FOLLOW UP WITH YOU ON THOSE.

>> OKAY.

DO YOU KNOW WHEN THE LAST REPORT WAS?

>> OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD, I DIDN'T KNOW THE DATE, NO.

>> OKAY.

I'D LOVE TO KNOW THAT, AND THINK WE GOT TO GET BACK TO REPORTING IN SOME WAY.

SO EVEN IF THE MEETINGS, FOR EXAMPLE, IT'S NOT -- IT'S NOT THE BEST WAY -- THE BEST WAY IS NOT TO HAVE IT PUBLIC, OKAY, I THINK WE WANT TO MAYBE TALK TO WHAT MIGHT BE ABLE TO BE PUBLIC. BUT I THINK A REPORT OUT IN SOME WAY IS VERY HELPFUL, BECAUSE ONE OF THE BIGGEST THINGS I FIND THAT'S REALLY DIFFICULT IS WHEN WE DO ADVOCATE WITH OUR RESIDENTS -- SOME OF WHOM COME FORWARD NOT HAPPILY.

I MEAN, YOU'RE SORT OF REPORTING, YOU'RE THE PERSON DOWN THE STREET, AND SOMETIMES IT CAN BE UGLY FOR THOSE CONSTITUENTS, BUT THEY COME FORWARD BECAUSE THEY CARE ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY AND WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

AND THEY -- BY THAT TIME THEY'VE ALREADY WORKED WITH ISP WHO SENT OUT INSPECTORS AND THEY'RE TRYING TO DO THE SAME THING.

SO THE NEXT STEP IS TO LOOK AT THE PROBLEM PROPERTY TASK FORCE. AND THE -- HOW HARD IT IS TO GET A PROPERTY DESIGNATED AS A PROBLEM PROPERTY JUST SEEMS TOO HARD, TOO DIFFICULT.

AND THEN WHEN IT IS, FOLKS WANT

TO KNOW, WELL, THEN NOW WHAT?  
NOTHING'S CHANGED NOW THAT IT'S  
LISTED.

SO I'D LOVE FOR US TO, ONE, GET  
BACK TO QUARTERLY REPORTING IN  
SOME WAY, THINKING ABOUT A  
PUBLIC SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN  
ENGAGE WITH THE TASK FORCE OR  
SOMEBODY WHO LEADS THE TASK  
FORCE IN SOME WAY TO OFFER THEIR  
IDEAS.

AND THEN MAYBE THINKING ABOUT IS  
THE PROBLEM PROPERTIES TASK  
FORCE RULES AND REGULATIONS AND  
POLICIES ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE  
ISSUE?

AND IF NOT, WHAT DO WE NEED TO  
DO AS A COUNCIL, AS A BODY, TO  
COMPLEMENT YOUR EFFORTS OR GIVE  
YOU MORE TOOLS TO DO SOMETHING  
WITH THESE PROPERTIES THAT FOLKS  
HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT FOR  
A REALLY LONG TIME AND NOTHING  
SEEMS TO BE CHANGING FROM THEIR  
POSITION AND THEIR PERSPECTIVE.  
SO I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING.  
THAT CONVERSATION TOO.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCIL PRESIDENT.  
COUNCILOR JANEY.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR CHAIR.  
BEFORE I BEGIN, I WANT TO ALSO  
HIGHLIGHT THE RESIDENTIAL PIECES  
AND SAY THANK YOU TO YOU,  
COMMISSIONER.

THERE ARE SEVERAL PROBLEM  
PROPERTIES AS COUNCILOR CAMPBELL  
HAS ALREADY NOTED.

I HAD A CALL RECENTLY ABOUT A  
PROPERTY ON KENNELWORTH STREET  
ON 22 KENNEL WORTH, DOOR BEING  
AJAR.

WHAT WE KNOW IS PROBLEM  
PROPERTIES CAN BE OVERWHELMED  
WITH ANIMALS, WITH SQUATTERS WHO  
ARE USING DRUGS AND OTHER  
THINGS.

THERE WAS ONE IN ROXBURY AND  
IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO SECURE THE  
BUILDING SO I JUST WANTED TO SAY  
THANK YOU FOR THAT.

AND JUST FOR CLARITY, WHEN WE'RE  
TALKING ABOUT PROBLEM  
PROPERTIES, WE'RE NOT JUST

TALKING ABOUT VACANT BUILDINGS.  
WE ARE TALKING ABOUT PROPERTIES  
WHO HAVE HAD SEVERAL COMPLAINTS  
AGAINST THEM, MAYBE THE POLICE  
HAVE BEEN CALLED, ETC..

YES?

>> THAT'S CORRECT.

OKAY.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF  
PROPERTIES ARE ACTUALLY  
OCCUPIED.

>> AND DO -- YOU ARE KEEPING  
THAT DATA BY NEIGHBORHOOD?

>> YES.

OKAY.

I'D BE INTERESTED IN THAT.  
AND WHEN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE  
LOTS THAT ARE CONTAMINATED,  
WHERE ARE THEY?

WE HAVE A NUMBER.

DO WE ALSO HAVE THAT BY  
NEIGHBORHOOD?

>> I CAN GET THAT.

IT'S NOT IN THE DATA I PROVIDED  
TO COUNCILOR CAMPBELL, BUT WE  
HAVE -- THEY ARE THROUGHOUT THE  
CITY THE ONES THAT WE OWN, AND  
I'D BE GLAD TO GIVE YOU A LIST.

>> NOW, MOST LOTS WOULD HAVE  
SOME CONTAMINATION FINAL A HOUSE  
WAS THERE AND IT HAS LEAD PAINT.  
BUT THAT'S SUPERFICIAL.

WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THAT DURING  
CONSTRUCTION.

IT'S THE -- I THINK YOU'RE  
INTERESTED IN THE LARGER  
CONTAMINATION.

>> I AM.

AND I'M WONDERING WHAT IS  
HAPPENING AND NOT BECAUSE I WANT  
TO SEE THEM THEN DISPOSED AND  
DEVALUED BUT I'M SURE THAT  
RESIDENTS, CHILDREN, SENIORS, NO  
ONE WANTS TO LIVE NEAR A LOT  
THAT IS CONTAMINATED.

AND I'M SURE MANY OF OUR  
RESIDENTS DON'T EVEN KNOW IF  
THEY'RE LIVING NEAR THAT.

AND I JUST SEE IT AS A PUBLIC  
SAFETY ISSUE.

>> RIGHT.

THERE'S -- I'LL GET YOU THE LIST  
OF THE ONES THAT I THINK ARE  
SERIOUS.



WE DO HAVE A HANDLE OF WORK WING  
THE STATE.

I'D BE GLAD TO GET YOU THAT  
LIST.

>> OKAY.

AND ON -- BACK TO RESIDENTIAL  
UNITS, COMMERCIAL UNITS, WHEN  
LOOKING AT THE HIGH-END LUXURY,  
DO WE HAVE A SENSE OF HOW MANY  
ARE OUT THERE?

DO WE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?

>> VACANCIES YOU MEAN?

YEAH.

NO, WE DON'T.

I DIDN'T KNOW OF A WAY TO  
COLLECT INFORMATION ON VACANT  
LUXURY UNITS.

>> YEAH.

IS IT THROUGH MLS OR WE JUST  
HAVEN'T FIGURED THAT OUT YET?

>> FOR SALE OR RENT, WE -- YOU  
COULD -- YOU COULD -- I GUESS  
COULD YOU GET THOSE IF THEY'RE  
PUT ON MLS OR THEY'RE USING THE  
TYPICAL AVENUES TO RENT OR SELL.  
BUT THE ONES THAT ARE -- HAVE  
BEEN SOLD AND ARE VACANT , I  
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU WOULD GET  
THOSE.

>> WHAT ABOUT THE COMMERCIAL --  
COMMERCIAL PLOTS THAT DON'T KIND  
OF FALL WITHIN A MAIN STREET?  
SO WE TALKED EARLIER ABOUT KIND  
OF THE HOTEL AT THE CORNER, THAT  
BUILDING AT NASSAU AND  
WASHINGTON NOT REALLY FALLING  
INTO DUDLEY, NOT REALLY FALLING  
INTO WASHINGTON MAIN.

DO WE HAVE A SENSE OF HOW MANY  
COMMERCIAL SPACES ARE VACANT  
THAT DON'T -- THAT ARE NOT GOING  
TO BE COUNTED IN THOSE -- THAT  
DATA THAT YOU PROVIDED EARLIER?

>> SO WE DO HAVE A SENSE OF  
VACANCY FOR COMMERCIAL  
PROPERTIES.

I THINK --

>> WHETHER OR NOT THEY'RE MAIN  
STREETS OR NOT.

>> RIGHT.

AND I THINK THE ONE THAT ALLUDES  
US -- ELUDES WAS, COUNCILOR  
CIOMMO RAISED, WHICH IS THE  
PROPERTY THAT IS LEASED EXCEPT A

BUSINESS, SO THE BUSINESS HAS A  
TEN-YEAR LEASE.

YEAR THREE THEY GO OUT OF  
BUSINESS.

THEY LEAVE THE PROPERTY.  
PROPERTY STAYS VACANT BUT IT'S  
STILL UNDER LEASE.

SO THEY DECIDE WHETHER THEY'RE  
GOING TO KEEP IT EMPTY AND  
THEY'RE GOING TO COLLECT THE  
RENT ANYWAY.

>> SO IF YOU HAVE THAT BY  
NEIGHBORHOOD, I'M ALSO  
INTERESTED IN THAT, AND THEN I'D  
KNOW -- I DON'T THINK COUNCILOR  
EDWARDS HAD A CHANCE SO I'LL  
YIELD THE REST OF MY TIME.  
THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR JANEY.  
COUNCILOR EDWARDS.

>> THANK YOU.

APOLOGIZE FOR HAVING TO BE IN  
AND OUT.

I WANTED TO JUST FOLLOW-UP ON  
THE -- A LOT OF DATAPOINT  
QUESTIONS THAT I KNOW PEOPLE  
PROBABLY ALREADY ASKED, BUT ONE  
SUGGESTION BECAUSE I THINK THIS  
REALLY IS A MATTER OF TRYING TO  
FIND WHERE THEY ARE, AND  
COMMISSIONER, IT -- YOU -- WOULD  
HAVING A QUESTION ON THE RENTAL  
REGISTRY FOR LANDLORDS THAT HAVE  
TO FLY COMPLI, A QUESTION THAT  
ACTUALLY SAID, IS THE UNIT  
VACANT OR NOT, WOULD THAT BE  
HELPFUL?

IF PEOPLE HAD TO IDENTIFY IF THE  
UNITS WERE VACANT?

>> THE INFORMATION IS BASED ON  
AN ANNUAL APPLICATION.

>> RIGHT.

I DON'T SEE IT AS A PROBLEM  
TO DO THAT, BUT THEN YOU'D NEED  
MORE OF A FOLLOW-UP.

>> TRUE.

IF THE DATA REGISTRATION IS  
VACANT BUT NEXT MONTH IT GETS  
RENTED SO HOW VALUABLE WOULD  
THAT DATA BE TO US?

>> WELL, IF YOU SAW THAT SOMEONE  
HAD YEARS OF VACANCY, IT MIGHT  
BE HELPFUL.

SO YOU CAN SEE IF -- SO THAT'S

JUST ONE POINT OF DATA THAT WE CAN MAYBE START TO COLLECT TO HELP US REALLY -- AND THIS IS -- I KNOW THAT A LOT OF THE HEARING HAS BEEN ABOUT COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE RESIDENTIAL ONES WHERE WE'RE FINDING FOLKS ARE NOT RENTING OUT THEIR UNITS, NOT -- AND WE WILL KNOW IF THEY'RE USING SHORT-TERM RENTAL, THANK GOODNESS, BECAUSE THEN THEY WILL HAVE A REGISTRY THAT'S UP, THAT WE'LL SEE THAT.

BUT WHEN -- YOU KNOW, IF WE SEE CONSISTENCELY -- CONSISTENTLY EVERY SINGLE YEAR THIS PERSON ISN'T RENDING OUT, THAT COULD BE SOMETHING WE COULD CORRECT.

AND THEN I ALSO WANTED TO FOLLOW UP ON -- OFTEN WE HAVE A PARTICULAR PROPERTY THAT ALL OF VUS TO LOOK AT -- HAVE TO LOOK AT, WHICH IS -- IF YOU'VE SEEN IT, IT IS A AN EMPTY BUILDING THAT HAS PIECES OF HANGING DOWN WHERE WINDOWS SHOULD BE.

THERE'S A BUNCH OF ANTENNAS ON TOP.

THEY CLAIM THEY CAN'T DO A LOT. IT IS AN EYESORE AT THE END OF THE DAY IN AN OTHERWISE NEIGHBORHOOD THAT IS GROWING EXPONENTIALLY.

AND SO HERE WE ARE STUCK LITERALLY WITH I THINK NOT ONLY BLIGHT BUT A HUGE, HUGE PROJECT THAT WE HAVE TO SEE EVERY DAY. AND SO HOW DO WE INCENTIVIZE AND PUSH?

THAT'S THE QUESTION THAT I THINK I COME HERE TO THIS HEARING ABOUT, AND PUSHING THEM TO DO SOMETHING.

WHEN WE DO TRY TO FIND WHAT VIOLATIONS ARE AVAILABLE, THERE ARE SOME, BUT THEY JUST DO SOME KIND OF WINDOW DRESSING AND KEEP MOVING.

>> MM-HMM.

I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE HAS ANY THOUGHTS OR WHAT WE CAN DO RIGHT NOW IN THE CITY OF BOSTON.

>> THAT'S A GREAT QUESTION,

COUNCILOR.

AND I THINK I AGREE WITH YOU  
WE'D LOVE TO SEE.

I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS OF  
CURRENT OWNERSHIP AND WHERE THEY  
ARE AND WHY NOT BUT WOULD BE  
WILLING TO APPROACH THEM AND TRY  
TO UNDERSTAND THEIR GOALS AND  
SEE IF, IN FACT, THE CITY CAN'T  
INCENTIVIZE SOMETHING THERE.

>> AND I'LL JUST GIVE YOU -- I  
UNDERSTAND WE CAN'T -- BUT  
THERE'S A CONFLICT.

THEY'RE CLAIMING THAT THEY CAN'T  
DO A LOT OF THE RENOVATIONS  
BECAUSE OF AN EASEMENT THAT  
UTILITY COMPANIES HAVE ON THE  
BUILDING THAT'S PREVENTING THEM  
FROM PUTTING IN ELECTRICAL  
SYSTEMS THAT THEY NEED BECAUSE  
THEY'RE ON THE ROOF BUT THEY  
ALSO HAVE THEIR ROOF PLUS EIGHT  
FEET DOWN INTO THE BUILDING AND  
SPACE AND THAT'S SOMETHING THEY  
INHERITED.

THEY PURCHASED IT.

AND ULTIMATELY, HOW DO WE  
INNOCENTSIZE VET -- INCENTIVIZE  
STEWARDSHIP.

IF YOU CAN'T FIGHT THE EASEMENT  
OR WHATEVER LEGAL BATTLES THEY  
HAVE, HOW DO WE GET THE CITY TO  
DO MORE WITH WHAT THEY HAVE?  
WE WOULD JOUST LIKE THEM TO PUT  
IN WINDOWS AND THEY CAN PAINT  
HAPPY PEOPLE IN THE THING AT  
THIS POINT.

BUT IT'S HORRIBLE RIGHT NOW WHEN  
YOU WALK BY, YOU WILL GET THE  
DEBRIS BLOWN ON YOU IN SOME  
CASES.

>> I DON'T -- THEY ARE  
RESPONSIBLE TO MAINTAIN THE  
BUILDING IN GOOD ORDER.  
AND WE DO TAKE THEM THROUGH THE  
VIOLATION PROCESS.

IF THEY DON'T REACT WELL TO US,  
OUR MANDATE IS TO BLOCK THE  
BUILDING FROM EIGHT FEET ABOVE  
THE GROUND TO MINIMIZE THAT --  
>> OKAY.

-- YOU KNOW, PEOPLE AND PETS.  
IF THERE IS A PUBLIC NUISANCE  
BEING CLAIMED BY THE BUILDING,

PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY GETTING HIT WITH DEBRIS COMING OUT OF THE BUILDING, WE CAN ACT ON THAT. >> OTHER AND THEN -- SO JUST -- SINCE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PROPERTIES AND HOW -- HOW WHEN THEY ARE BECOMING THE NUISANCE ISSUE AND I -- I REMEMBER READING AN ARTICLE WHERE YOU TALKED A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR RECEIVERSHIP PROGRAM AND THAT'S SOMETHING I FIND VERY INTERESTING, AND I THINK IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY THAT I'D LOVE TO SEE INCREASED PARTICIPATION AND INCREASED PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR OFFICE ON, PARTICULARLY AS I SEE THAT AS A BUILD SOMETHING COMING INTO HELPING -- BUILDING IS COMING INTO HELPING NEIGHBORS STEP UP AND PUT THE MONEY AND TIME INTO CARETAKING OR STEWARDING THIS BUILDING AND THAT THEY COULD RECEIVE IT ULTIMATELY IF IT GOES INTO FORECLOSURE SO, ON AND SO FORTH. I'D LOVE TO HEAR THOUSAND THAT SYSTEM WORKS AND HOW WE CAN ONLY INCREASE THE PARTNERSHIP AND STEWARDSHIP COMMUNITY. I'M THINKING OF KNOW NOVA. I'M -- NOAA AND CDC AND COMMUNITY GROUPS THAT WOULD LOVE TO HELP IF THERE'S A WAY TO PUSH THAT IN A -- >> RECEIVERSHIP IS A COURT PROCESS. >> RIGHT. AND IT USUALLY TAKES US A WHILE TO GET TO THAT POINT. I PERSONALLY THINK RECEIVERSHIP IS AN EXCELLENT WAY OF SHOVE SOLVING SOME OF -- RESOLVING SOME OF THESE FIRMS YOU CAN TAKE A BUILDING THAT IS IN SUCH A STATE THAT IT CANNOT GET A MORTGAGE SO THE OWNER OF THE BUILDING IS AT A HUGE DISADVANTAGE. THE COURT APPOINTS A RECEIVER. THE RECEIVER GOES THROUGH THE REVITALIZATION OF THE BUILDING. THE OWNER IS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY BY THE JUDGE TO PAY

THE BILLS FOR THE REPAIRS.  
OWNERSHIP CONTROL THE BUILDING.  
THEY DON'T LOSE OWNERSHIP UNTIL  
THE JUDGE DETERMINES THAT, IS  
RETURNED BACK TO THE PERSON, AND  
WHEN THESE BUILDINGS ARE  
REVITALIZED, THEY ARE NOW  
LIVABLE SO THE CHANCES OF  
GETTING A MORTGAGE IS GOOD.  
A LOT OF PEOPLE FIGHT THE  
RECEIVERSHIP.

THEY DON'T WANT TO LOSE CONTROL  
OF THE BUILDING.  
WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF CASES BUT  
WE HAVE SOME ESPECIALLY RECENTLY  
OF NOTE THAT ARE REALLY GOOD.  
THE OTHER THING THAT WE TRY TO  
DO AND WE HAD A COUPLE OF  
PROPERTIES THAT WE WORKED ON  
COLLECTIVELY WITH BOTH THE STATE  
AND A LOT OF SUBSIDY ISSUES TO  
TAKE A LAND LAW THAT WAS  
DOING -- LANDLORD THAT WAS DOING  
MA.

HE HAD VACANT DEPARTMENTS.  
THROUGH A COLLECTIVE ACTION OF  
THE CITY DEPARTMENTS, WE WERE  
ABLE TO GET THE COURT TO APPOINT  
AN EXECUTIVE TO IT AND THEY WENT  
THROUGH THE BEST EFFORT OF  
SELLING IT AND THEN THROUGH THE  
CITY'S EFFORTS, WE WERE ABLE TO  
DIRECT THAT AND SUPPORT ONE OF  
THE CDCs TO GET CONTROL OF  
THIS PROPERTY.

IT WAS A WIN-WIN FOR EVERYBODY.  
NONE OF THE TENANTS WERE  
DISPLACED.

THE BUILDINGS NOW HAS  
STEWARDSHIP THAT'S REAL  
POSITIVE, AND IT'S ALL COMMUNITY  
BASED.

SO WE WERE VERY HAPPY.  
WE DON'T HAVE AS MANY OF THOSE  
AS WE LIKE BUT WHEN WE SEIZE THE  
OPPORTUNITY, WE REALLY GO AFTER  
IT.

>> AND I WOULD LOVE TO SIT DOWN  
WITH YOU AND TALK ABOUT HOW WE  
CAN INCREASE OR SUPPORT THAT  
PROCESS, WHETHER WE'RE GOING TO  
USE LEGAL SERVICES, WHETHER  
WE'RE GOING TO DO SOMETHING, BUT  
I THINK INASMUCH AS NEIGHBORS

ARE READY TO STEP UP INSTEAD OF JUST COMPLAINING TO THE CITY DO SOMETHING, I'D LOVE FOR THEM TO BE AT THE TABLE TO ALSO GET IT DONE.

SO THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU.

, COUNCILOR EDWARDS.

I KNOW FOR -- WE HAVE A SECOND PANEL.

I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE THE FIRST PANEL IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO STAY, YOU COULD, BUT I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO INVITE DOWN THE SECOND PANEL NOW THAT WOULD INCLUDE ALLISON CARTER AND I'D LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU TO THE FIRST PANEL FOR BEING HERE, FOR TAKING OUR QUESTIONS, FOR BEING RESPONSIVE AND FOR ALL YOU DO ACROSS THE CITY.

WE APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU DO. SO THE SECOND PANEL WOULD BE ALLISON CARTER, ALEIA HAMADA FOREST, AND CHUCK COLLINS.

GOOD AFTERNOON TO ALL THREE OF.

>> YOU GOOD AFTERNOON.

DO YOU CARE TO MAKE OPENING STATEMENTS?

WOULD YOU CARE TO OPEN -- TO MAKE OPENING STATEMENTS?

>> YEAH.

OH, GO AHEAD.

MY NAME'S ALLISON CARTER.

I'M THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR FOR THE TOWN OF ARLINGTON.

I'M A FORMER DIRECTOR OF MAIN STREET IN BOSTON.

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

I'M HERE TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR TOWN'S REGISTRATION OF -- AND MAINTENANCE OF VACANT, COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS BYLAW.

IT'S A MOUTHFUL.

SO, IN JUNE OF 2015, ARLINGTON CENTER HAD 17 VACANT COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES, MANY WHICH HAD BEEN VACANT FOR A YEAR OR MORE.

BY SEPTEMBER OF 2017, THAT NUMBER HAD DROPPED TO FIVE.

THIS IS LARGELY IN PART TO THE BYLAW WHICH WAS IMPROVED --

APPROVED BY ARLINGTON TOWN  
MEETING IN OCTOBER OF 2016.  
EXCUSE ME.

THE BYLAW AIMS TO REDUCE THE  
NUMBER OF VACANT STOREFRONTS BY  
REQUIRING PROPERTY OWNERS TO  
REGISTER THEIR VACYEANSES WITH  
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.  
OWNERS PAY AN ANNUAL  
REGISTRATION FEE OF \$400 PER  
VACANT STOREFRONT AND THAT'S  
DESIGNED AS A PROPERTY THAT HAS  
NOT BEEN OCCUPIED FOR 90 DAYS OR  
MORE.

LE THE FEE CAN BE WAIVED IF THE  
PROPERTY CAN DEMONSTRATE  
FINANCIAL HARDSHIP OR IF THEY  
AGREE TO DISPLAY ART OR POP-UP  
INSTALLATION.

THE WAIVER HOWEVER HAS TO BE  
RENEWED ON A QUARTERLY BASIS SO  
YOU CAN'T JUST ELECT TO HAVE A  
WAIVER AND WASH YOUR HANDS OF IT  
FOR A YEAR.

SO THERE'S A CHECKING IN THAT'S  
BUILT IN.

OH, AND THE REGISTRATION FEE IS  
\$400 BECAUSE THEY'RE REQUIRED TO  
GET QUARTERLY BUILDING  
INSPECTIONS TO ASSURE THAT THE  
PROPERTY IS SAFE, SO THE COSTS  
THE TOWN \$100 A MONTH, \$100 FOR  
INSPECTION SO FOUR INSPECTIONS A  
YEAR.

THAT'S HOW WE ARRIVED AT THAT  
REGISTRATION FEE.

WE WANTED IT TO, AGAIN, BE  
SOMETHING THAT MOVED PEOPLE  
ALONG BUT NOT SO ONEROUS TO SEE  
THAT IT WAS THOUGHT TO BE  
PUNITIVE.

SO, SO FAR IT HAS WORKED VERY  
WELL.

IT HAS MOTIVATED COMMERCIAL  
PROPERTY OWNERS TO RENT THEIR  
SPACES BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY,  
IT'S OPENED UP A REGULAR  
DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TOWN AND  
THESE PROPERTY OWNERS.

AND SO WE HAVE A MUCH GREATER  
AWARENESS OF WHAT'S GOING ON.  
WHICH IS NICE.

SO THANK YOU.



>> THANK YOU.

HI.

I'M CHUCK COLLINS.

THANK YOU, CHAIRMAN FLYNN, AND  
PRESIDENT CAMPBELL, AND MADAME  
AND COUNCILOR O'MALLEY.

I'M CHUCK COLLINS.

I WORK FOR A RESEARCH GROUP THAT  
LOOKS AT INEQUALITY ISSUES.

I'M GOING TO BACK UP AND SORT OF  
GIVE A KIND OF A LITTLE BIT OF A  
GLOBAL PICTURE HERE WHICH IS  
PART OF WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH  
IS A CHANGING GLOBAL ECONOMY  
WHERE BILLIONS, TRILLIONS OF  
DUALS ARE LOOKING FOR -- DOLLARS  
ARE LOOKING FOR A SAFE HAVEN,  
LOOKING FOR PLACES TO TOUCH DOWN  
IN REAL PROPERTY IN THE FORM OF  
INVESTMENTS THAT WILL HOLD THEIR  
VALUE.

AND BOSTON, ALONG WITH A LOT OF  
OTHER COASTAL CITIES, IS ONE OF  
THOSE SORT OF SUPER CITIES WHERE  
NOT ONLY ARE WE EXPERIENCING THE  
NORMAL CYCLES OF INVESTMENT AND  
DISINVESTMENT AND GENT  
TRIFICATION BUT WE'RE SEEING  
SUPER CHARGED TRENDS BECAUSE OF  
HUGE AMOUNTS OF GLOBAL CAPITAL.  
THIS IS NOT SORT OF OUR PARENTS  
OR GRANDPARENTS' VACANCY ISSUES.  
SO ONE OF THE CHALLENGES I THINK  
IS THAT WE'RE -- OUR CITIES ARE  
TRYING TO CATCH UP IN TERMS OF  
PUBLIC POLICY JUST TO UNDERSTAND  
WHAT'S HAPPENING, AND THAT'S WHY  
I COMMEND THE COUNCIL FOR JUST  
HAVING THIS DISCUSSION TRYING TO  
GRAPPLE WITH THESE FORCES AS --  
AS -- AS CHAIRMAN FLYNN SAID,  
THEY ARE ABOUT COMMERCIAL AND  
RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES THAT ARE  
REALLY WELL STORAGE UNITS.  
THEY ARE NOT HOMES.  
THEY ARE NOT COMMERCIAL UNITS  
THAT ARE BEING USED FOR  
BUSINESSES.  
THEY ARE WAYS TO PRESERVE AN  
ASSET, AND THAT IS ITS MAIN  
PURPOSE.  
AND THE REASON WE SHOULD BE  
CONCERNED IS THAT THEY ARE  
DISRUPTING LOCAL MARKETS.

THEY'RE DISRUPTING THE REAL ESTATE MARKET, THE SORT OF GENTRIFICATION FORCES DOWNTOWN WITH THESE LUXURY BUILDINGS SORT OF PUSH US OUT AND AFFECTS OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

WE'RE BUILDING NEW ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THESE NEW LUXURY BUILDINGS. AND INTERESTING SIDE DIMENSION IS ONE DALTON PLACE WHICH IS NOW BEING BUILT, IF YOU LOOK AT THE PRUDENTIAL CENTER, IT'S CATCHING UP QUICKLY TO THE PRUDENTIAL CENTER, GIVES ITS INVESTORS AN EB5 VISA FOR INVESTING A MILLION DOLLARS IN THEIR UNITS. SO IT'S ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTING TO INEQUITIES IN OUR IMMIGRATION SYSTEM.

PEOPLE ARE BUYING THEIR CITIZENSHIP OR BUYING A GREEN CARD BY VIRTUE OF INVESTING IN THOSE PROPERTIES.

SOME OF THEM ARE SO SELF-CONTAINED THAT ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST RECENTLY WROTE AN ARTICLE SAYING, "WHO NEEDS A NEIGHBORHOOD WHEN YOU HAVE WILD AMENITIES LIKE THESE?" AND SO AGAIN WHEN ONE DALTON PLACE IS BUILDING ITS OWN PARK IT'S GOING TO BE A SELF-CONTAINED UNIVERSE FOR THE VERY, VERY WEALTHY.

WE DO KNOW A LITTLE BIT -- YOU WERE ASKING, COUNCILOR O'MALLEY, ABOUT SORT OF THE OCCUPANCY ISSUES, AND WE DON'T KNOW AMONG THESE LARGE LUXURY PROPERTIES HOW MANY ARE ACTUALLY VACANT. BUT WE DO KNOW A COUPLE THINGS. WE KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT HOW MANY ARE OWNED BY SHELL CORPORATIONS, TRUSTS, LLCs, WHERE THEY MASK THE ACTUAL BENEFICIAL OWNERS WHO OWNS IT AND WE KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT HOW MANY OF THOSE UNITS TAKE THE RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION. AND WE HAVE A STUDY COMING OUT IN A COUPLE WEEKS, BUT HERE'S A PREVIEW OF THAT.

OF THE 1500 MOST RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED LUXURY UNITS, SO

THAT'S MILLENNIUM TOWER,  
MILLENNIUM PLACE, THE  
RITZ-CARLTON, HARBORVIEW AND 22  
LIBERTY PLACE, THOSE PROPERTIES,  
ABOUT 1500 UNITS, ROUGHLY A  
THIRD OF THEM ARE OWNED BY SHELL  
CORPORATIONS, HALF OF THEM DO  
NOT TAKE THE RESIDENTIAL  
EXEMPTION, 60-70% IN SOME CASES.  
IN THE CASE OF MILLENNIUM TOWER,  
WHICH I THINK THE SHADOW WILL BE  
COMING OUR WAY SHORTLY, THAT  
443-UNIT BUILDING, 36% OF THOSE  
UNITS ARE SHELL CORPORATIONS.  
79% DO NOT TAKE THE RESIDENTIAL  
EXEMPTION.

WHEN I TALK ABOUT SHELL  
CORPORATIONS, THAT'S --  
CORPORATIONS, THAT'S IMPORTANT  
BECAUSE WHEN WE HAVE THIS --  
WE'VE HEARD OF A COUPLE OF  
PEOPLE ON THE PANEL TALK ABOUT  
HOW WE DON'T KNOW WHO OWNS THESE  
PROPERTIES.

IT IS ACTUALLY HARDER TO GET A  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY CARD THAN  
IT IS TO CREATE A SHELL  
CORPORATION TO OWN SOME OF THESE  
UNITS, BECAUSE TO GET A BOSTON  
PUBLIC LIBRARY CARD, YOU HAVE TO  
SAY WHO YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU  
LIVE.

AND THAT'S NOT THE CASE WITH  
THESE CORPORATIONS.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THAT?

I THINK, IN LOOKING AT THE  
VACYEANS ISSUE IS ONE ISSUE.  
SOME ARE LOOK AT HIGH END REAL  
ESTATE TRANSFER TAXES AS ANOTHER  
WAY TO ADDRESS THE COST TO THE  
COMMUNITY OF THESE HIGH-END  
PROPERTIES.

SOME CITIES GLOBALLY ARE LOOKING  
AT REQUIRING A DISCLOSURE OF  
BENEFICIAL OWNER.

WHO ARE YOU?

WHO REALLY OWNS THIS PROPERTY?

IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN  
LEGAL REMEDIES, YOU NEED TO SAY  
WHO YOU ARE.

YOU NEED TO BE AS BOLD AS A  
LIBRARY CARD.

SAY WHO YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU  
LIVE.

SO THAT -- THOSE ARE THINGS THAT WE COULD TALK ABOUT IN ANOTHER CONTEXT.

MY COLLEAGUE, EMMA AND I DID A POLICY BRIEF THAT WE WILL SHARE WITH YOU THAT LOOKS AT WHAT OTHER CITIES ARE DOING SPECIFICALLY ON THIS VACYEANS ISSUE BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL, AND JUST A FEW BRIEF OCCUPATIONS.

ONE -- OBSERVATIONS.

ONE IS THEY ALL DEFINE VACANT AS PROPERTIES THAT SIT EMPTY AT LEAST SIX MONTHS OF THE YEAR. THAT SEEMS TO BE SORT OF ALMOST A UNIFORM STANDARD.

THERE IS THIS CONCERN BOTH ABOUT BLIGHT AND JUST EMPTY BUILDINGS, AND EVEN IN THIS DISCUSSION, I THINK PRESIDENT CAMPBELL'S TALKING ABOUT VACANT BUILDINGS THAT ARE SORT OF FESTERING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT WE ALSO HAVE EMPTY UNITS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRICES ALONG WITH EMPTY SPACES.

SOME OF THESE ORDINANCES ADDRESS ALL OF THOSE.

THEY PROVIDE LOTS OF EXEMPTIONS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE RENOVATING THEIR PROPERTY OR CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP, OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. MOST OF THEM LEVY A TAX OR A FINE THAT'S TIED TO THE SQUARE FOOTAGE, SO IN THE CASE OF WASHINGTON, D.C., WE'VE HAD AN IN ORDERANCE IN PLACE SINCE 2010, WASHINGTON, D.C., CHARGES \$5 PER \$100 OF ASSESSED VALUE IF THE PROPERTY IS BLIGHTED, THEY CHARGE DOUBLE, \$10 FOR EVERY \$100 OF ASSESSED VALUE.

WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY BE THE CITY THAT WE WANT TO LOOK THE CLOSEST AT IN TERMS OF WHAT THEY'VE DONE, BECAUSE I THINK THEY WERE BOTH CONCERNED ABOUT THE -- THEY -- THE SORT OF VACANT BLIGHT BUT ALSO HIGH-END BLIGHT.

AND SO I THINK RECENTLY, THEIR CITY AUDITOR DID A BLISTERING 100-PAGE ASSESSMENT OF HOW THEY

HADN'T REALLY MANAGED THAT PROGRAM VERY WELL.  
SO WE COULD LEARN FROM THEM -- THEIR MISTAKES PERHAPS.  
THE OTHER ONE THAT'S INTERESTING -- AND ALMOST ALL THESE ORDINANCES ARE NEW.  
WE DON'T HAVE YEARS OF TRACK RECORD.  
WE DON'T -- YOU KNOW, SOME OF THEM ARE JUST IN THE LAST TWO YEARS RESPONDING TO THESE CONDITIONS.  
VANCOUVER, CANADA, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, HAS AN EMPTY HOMES TAX THAT'S BEEN IN PLACE FOR YEARS, BUT THEY WERE EXPERIENCING HIGH-END EMPTY HOMES, WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS ALMOST SORT OF GHOST TOWN COMMUNITY CONDITIONS IN SOME NEIGHBORHOODS BECAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL, INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENTS.  
SO THAT TAX IS A 1% TAX ON THE ASSESSED VALUE EACH YEAR IF A UNIT IS KEPT VACANT.  
AND THEY REQUIRE KIND OF LIKE ARLINGTON, THEY REQUIRE THE OWNERS TO PROACTIVELY REGISTER WHETHER THE PROPERTY -- CERTIFY THAT THE PROPERTY IS VACANT AND THEN THEY HAVE A VERY STIFF PENALTY IN THE EVENT THAT THEY FIND THAT THE UNIT IS, INDEED, VACANT AND THEY'VE REGISTERED AS AN OCCUPIED UNIT.  
ALMOST LIKE 100% SURCHARGE ON ASSESSED VALUE.  
SO THEY HAVE THIS EMPTY HOMES TAX, BUT THEY HAVE A VERY HIGH PENALTY FOR -- FOR BASICALLY FABRICATING.  
SO THOSE ARE JUST A COUPLE OF THE OBSERVATIONS, AND I WILL CIRCULATE THIS BRIEF WITH YOU ALL AND WORK -- HEIM I'M HAPPY TO WORK WITH YOUR TEAM AND AS WE GET MORE DATA ON THE HIGH-END VACYANCEY ISSUE, WE WILL SHARE THAT WITH THE COUNCIL.  
SO THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME.  
>> THANK YOU .  
HI.  
I'M AALIYAH.

I'M DIRECTOR OF THE VILLAGE MAIN STREET.

THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME,  
ESPECIALLY COUNCILOR O'MALLEY  
FOR INVITING ME TO THE PANEL.  
IN THE PAST YEAR, WE HAVE HOSTED  
SEVERAL POP-UPS AS A WAY TO GIVE  
LIFE TO VACANCIES.

WE HAVE LARGER TERM ONES LIKE AT  
THE SUBSTATION.

WE'VE HAD SHORTER TERM ONES LIKE  
OUR INDOOR DRUM CIRCLE AND OPEN  
HOUSE, ANOTHER STORE FRONT.

SOME FACTS ABOUT ROSLINDALE  
VILLAGE.

WE HAVE 147 STOREFRONTS, ABOUT A  
5.4% VACYANCEY RATE.

FIVE OF OUR VACANCIES HAVE BEEN  
VACANT FOR AT LEAST ONE TO FOUR  
YEARS.

AND UNFORTUNATELY, THE VACANCIES  
ARE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO EACH  
OTHER.

SO IT LOOKS WORSE THAN IT IS.  
AND THE SAME NEIGHBORING  
BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO BE  
FRUSTRATED WITH THAT.

THERE ARE ALSO SOME VACANCIES  
THAT HAVE BEEN LEASED BUT STILL  
LOOK VACANT BECAUSE THE TENANT  
IS STUCK SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD  
OF PERMITTING AND LICENSING AND  
SOMETIMES THAT BUSINESS PULLS  
OUT AND THE PROPERTY OWNER HAS  
TO START OVER.

AND WE'VE SEEN THAT A COUPLE OF  
TIMES.

RVMS HAS WORKED TO GRAPPLE WITH  
THE VATH ANSIS ISSUE HAS BEEN TO  
CREATE A VACANCY SNAP THAT'S  
PUBLIC ON OUR WEBSITE.

SO IT CONNECTS PROPERTY OWNERS  
AND POTENTIAL TENANTS WITH WHO  
TO CONTACT IF THEY'RE INTERESTED  
IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THAT  
VACANCY.

WE'VE ALSO HAD A DESIGN  
COMMITTEE PROJECT, OUR EMPTY  
STOREFRONT SIGNAGE SO INSTEAD OF  
AN EMPTY SPACE YOU SEE A SIGN  
THAT DIRECTS YOU TO THAT  
VACANCY'S WEBSITE.

SOME SUCCESSES WE'VE SEEN WITH  
THE POP-UP PROGRAM IS AN

INCREASE OF FOOT TRAFFIC, FOR SOMETHING TEMPORARY AND EXCITING.

THE TRILIAN BEER GARDEN BROUGHT AT THE MOST ACCOUNT WAS ABOUT -- THE COUNT WAS ABOUT 19.5000 PEOPLE CAME TO ROSLINDALE OVER THE COURSE OF 3 MONTHS . THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN REPEATED PEOPLE.

[ LAUGHTER ]

BUT THERE WAS A LOT OF PEOPLE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD OF ROSLINDALE BEFORE EVER. PEOPLE FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE CAME TO ROSLINDALE.

IT BROUGHT -- POP-UPS BRING COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO MAY HAVE NEVER BEEN INSIDE OR A LONG TIME IN A SPACE TO DREAM.

SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE -- ENDED UP BEING POTENTIAL TENANTS, SO WE HAD A POP-UP IF A VACANT STOREFRONT THAT BROUGHT IN FAMILIES IN PARTICULAR.

IT WAS A BUILD ZONE.

IT WAS TARGETED AT YOUNG CHILDREN TO BUILD THESE CONTRAPTIONS IN A VACANT STOREFRONTS AND COUPLE OF PARENTS ENDED UP RENTING THAT SPACE AND IT WILL SOON BE THE FIRST BREWERY OWNED BY PARENTS OF ROSLINDALE WHO CAME TO BUILD SOME POP-UPS.

IT ALSO OPENED LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH PROPERTY OWNERS WHO WE MAY HAVE NOT SPOKEN WITH BEFOREHAND, SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE WE HAD A PROJECT WE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT.

IT ENGAGED PROPERTY OWNERS.

WE ALWAYS INVITED PROPERTY OWNERS TO THE POP-UPS.

AND IT INSPIRED PROPERTY OWNERS TO THINK MORE ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORS' WANTS AND NEEDS AND WHAT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE SPACE.

THANKS.

>> THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

AND I'D LIKE TO ASK COUNCILOR O'MALLEY IF YOU'D LIKE TO START.

>> THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

THANK YOU, ALL, AND THANK YOU,  
GUYS, FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

I KNOW WE GOT YOU ON A LITTLE  
BIT LATER THAN WE HOPED.

BUT I SPECIFICALLY WANTED TO  
BRING THIS PANEL TOGETHER, ALI,  
TO TALK ABOUT YOUR PERSPECTIVE  
AS A FORMER BOSTON MAIN STREET  
HEAD AND IN ARLINGTON WHAT  
YOU'VE DONE.

CHUCK, YOU'VE DONE SUCH AMAZING  
WORK ON SO MANY -- IMPORTANT  
SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES, ECONOMIC  
ISSUES, AND I APPRECIATE SORT OF  
GIVING US THE 50,000-FOOT VIEW  
DISPLAY ON WHAT WE OUGHT -- WHAT  
WE CAN DO AND WHAT WE OUGHT TO  
BE DOING.

AND ALIA, YOU'VE DONE SUCH A  
REMARKABLE JOB, THE FIRST MAIN  
STREET DISTRICT IN THE CITY OF  
BOSTON THAT IS JUST THRIVING AND  
I SPECIFICALLY -- I WAS ONE OF  
THOSE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF  
PEOPLE AT THE TRILLION BREWERY,  
PERHAPS MORE THAN ONCE AND IT  
WAS SUCH A GREAT THING.

WE'RE NOT LOOKING AT THE  
IMPUGNTIVE -- THERE'S A LITTLE  
FEEDBACK TO THIS HEARING ORDER  
BUT WE WANT TO HELP THESE  
BUSINESSES.

THE CITY CAN ABSOLUTELY PLAY A  
ROLE AND SHOULD PLAY A ROLE BUT  
WE ALSO NEED TO USE EVERY ARROW  
IN OUR QUIVER.

MY FIRST WE IS, I WAS TALKING TO  
MY COSPONSOR, PRESIDENT CAMPBELL  
ON THIS.

WE'RE GOING TO ASK THE CHAIR TO  
SUSPEND THIS HEARING AND  
TRANSITION INTO A SERIES OF  
WORKING SESSIONS AND I'D LOVE IT  
IF YOU THREE COULD JOINS JUST TO  
CONTINUE TO OFFER YOUR  
PERSPECTIVE.

SO I ASSUME THE ANSWER -- YOU  
GUYS WOULD BE WILLING TO DO  
THAT.

AND I ALSO WANT TO SAY DANIELLE  
JOSEPH, THANK YOU FOR YOUR GREAT  
WORK AS WELL.

SO VERY, VERY BRIEFLY.

ALI, WE'LL START WITH YOU WHAT



SORT OF WAS THE IMPETUS THAT HAD ARLINGTON TO COME UP WITH THE IDEA OF THE VACANCY FEE?

>> IT WAS NOT JUST THAT THERE WERE VACANCIES, AND PART OF THE COMMERCIAL CLIMATE, BUT IT WAS THAT THERE WAS A CONCENTRATION OF LONG-TERM VACANCIES IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT.

AND WE LOOKED AT THE PROPERTIES, YOU COULD CAN BASICALLY IDENTIFY THREE PROPERTY OWNERS.

AND SO WE CALLED THEM ALL IN AND HAD MEETINGS WITH THEM.

AND -- AGAIN TO GET BETTER PICTURE WHAT WAS GOING ON.

IT BECAME CLEAR THAT SOME MIGHT NEED MORE HAUTEVATION.

>> YEAH --

MORE MOTIVATION TO ACTUALLY DO THEIR DUE DILIGENCE TO TRY AND RENT THEIR PROPERTIES. AND SO THAT'S WHEN WE DECIDED IT ROSE TO THE LEVELS OF NEEDING A BYLAW.

>> AND WAS IT -- DID THE TOWN -- DID THE TOWN SELECT -- PUT THE BYLAW BEFORE TOWN MEETING?

HOW DOES IT WORK IN TERMS OF ENACTING AN ORDINANCE OR A LAW?

>> THAT'S A GREAT QUESTION.

SO THERE WAS A LOT OF RESIDENTS WERE GETTING REALLY UPSET, AND THEY WERE CALLING THE TOWN MANAGER'S OFFICE AND JUST SAYING, HOW CAN THEY BE EXPECT -- HOW CAN THEY BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS, THESE PROPERTY OWNERS, FOR SUCH A LONG TIME?

THEY WERE AFRAID IT WAS GOING TO DECREASE THEIR PROPERTY VALUES.

AND SO THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE BYLAW AS IT ENDED UP BEING WRITTEN IS ESSENTIALLY STATES

THAT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO

MAINTAIN THEIR PROPERTIES IN THE -- THEY'RE THEIR PRIVATE

PROPERTIES IN PUBLIC SPACE AND THAT THAT LAYS THE FOUNDATION

FOR KIND OF THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND IT.

AND, YEAH, SO IT WAS SOME CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND THEN

THEY GOT THE TOWN OFFICIALS INVOLVED.  
>> AND IT WAS A VOTE AND PASSED OVERWHELMINGLY?  
>> IT PASSED VERY, VERY OVERWHELMINGLY, BECAUSE WE HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING. SO FOR RESIDENTS, IT WAS A PRETTY EASY SELL.  
>> WHAT'S THE POPULATION OF ARLINGTON?  
>> 44,000 ROUGHLY.  
SO IT'S ABOUT -- IT'S A LITTLE BIT LARGER THAN JAMAICA PLAIN -- A NEIGHBORHOOD IN BOSTON.  
BUT MY POINT IS THAT'S DA -- THOSE STATISTICS ARE REMARKABLE. 17 VACANT PROPERTIES JUNE 2015, 5 VACANT PROPERTIES IN SEPTEMBER OF 2017.  
>> AND THAT'S JUST IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT. THERE ARE TWO OTHER COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND ONE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT, BUT, YEAH, THAT WAS THE CENTER OF TOWN.  
>> OKAY.  
ALIA, A BUSINESS OWNER COMES TO YOU AND SAYS -- OR A LANDLORD, I SHOULD SAY, COMES TO YOU AND SAYS, I KNGT -- I CAN'T FIND A GOOD TENANT FOR MY HEARING. TALK A LITTLE BIT VERY BRIEFLY SORT OF WHAT YOU WOULD DO, HOW THE CITY COULD BE HELPFUL AND MAYBE OTHER STEPS THAT WE SHOULD BE THINKING OF?  
>> SURE.  
WE GET CALLS ALL THE TIME FROM POTENTIAL BUSINESSES, BUSINESS OWNERS, ENTREPRENEURS, ESPECIALLY IF THEY LIVE IN ROSLINDALE AND THEY SEE THE VACANCIES.  
>> YEAH.  
AND SO I HAVE A LIST IN MY OFFICE OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE CALLED AND I CONNECT THEM WITH THE LANDLORD.  
WE BROKER THAT RELATIONSHIP, OR WE CONNECT THEM WITH A REALTOR BROKER WHO'S REPRESENTING THE LANDLORD.

THE CITY COULD BE HELPFUL IF  
THERE ARE -- AND MAIN STREET  
DIRECTORS ALSO HAVE A GOOGLE  
GROUP AND SOMETIMES WE PASS  
ALONG BUSINESSES THAT MAY NOT BE  
THE BEST FIT FOR CERTAIN  
DISTRICTS THAT MAY BE A BETTER  
FIT IN OTHER DISTRICTS.  
MAYBE THE CITY HAS A SIMILAR  
LIST.

I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THEY  
CONTACTED THE OFFICE DIRECTLY  
AND SOMETIMES WE'LL GET A LITTLE  
LIKE, HEY, THE PIZZA COMPANY  
LOOKING FOR SPACE IN ROSLINDALE.  
IS YOUR DISTRICT -- DOES YOUR  
DISTRICT HAVE A SPACE GOOD  
ENOUGH?

AND THAT HAPPENS VERY RARELY,  
BUT I WOULD LOVE TO SEE IT MORE  
AND GET CONTACTED MORE BY THE  
CITY, I THINK, BY --

>> YEAH.

-- BUSINESS CONTACTS.

YEAH.

NO, I AGREE.

AND FINALLY, SO THERE ARE FIVE  
VACANT STORES IN RVMS THAT HAVE  
BEEN VACANT FOR MORE THAN FOUR  
YEARS.

>> YEAH.

HAVE YOU GONE TO THE  
LANDLORDS -- AND I'M TO THE  
LOOKING FOR YOU TO BETRAY ANY  
CONFIDENCES BUT I WOULD VENTURE  
A GUESS AT LEAST SOME OF THEM  
YOU WENT TO A LANDLORD AND SAID,  
HEY, I HAVE SOMEONE WHO'S  
INTERESTED AND HAS THE ISSUE  
BEEN THEY'RE HOLDING OUT FOR  
MORE MONEY?

>> IT VARIES.

SOME IT OF IT IS HOLDING OUT FOR  
MORE MONEY.

SOME OF IT IS A LANDLORD WHO  
WANTS SOMETHING VERY, VERY  
SPECIFIC IN THEIR SPACE AND THAT  
KIND OF JUST HASN'T COME AROUND  
YET.

AND IT'S A PREFERENCE.

AND SOMETIMES THE LANDLORD ISN'T  
IN TOWN OR LIVES IN LOS ANGELES  
OR IS TRAVELING ABROAD  
FREQUENTLY AND IS -- WE CAN'T

EVEN GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM.

>> YEAH.

THAT HAPPENS A LOT TOO.

YEAH.

OKAY.

AND THEN CHUCK, BRIEFLY, YOU KNOW, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT VACANT AMOUNTS, VACANT STRUCTURES, SORT OF INVESTMENT UNIT.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT VACANT LOTS SWELLING.

DO YOU SEE SOMETHING THAT'S SORT OF A TOOL OR POLICY TO PUT IN PLACE THAT COULD ADDRESS ALL THREE OR SHOULD WE BE FOUK USED ON THESE INDIVIDUALLY?

>> I THINK RAISING THE COST OF VACANCY, DISINCENTIVIZING KEEPING VACANTS -- UNITS VACANT FOR A LONG TIME.

SO LIKE IN ROSLINDALE, IF A PROPERTY STAYS VACANT FOR FOUR YEARS, IT'S STARTING TO COST YOU -- THE REAL COST TO THE COMMUNITY ARE BEING ASSESSED ON YOU.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

THEN YOU MAY THINK ABOUT IT DIFFERENTLY.

SO I THINK THAT WOULD BE THE CASE.

IT'S HARD TO KNOW ON HIGH-END REAL ESTATE WHAT THAT COST POINT WOULD BE, WHERE IT WOULD MATTER.

>> YEAH.

THANK YOU, ALL.

THANK WHERE YOU MR. CHAIRMAN.

>> THANK YOU, COUNCILOR

O'MALLEY.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CAMPBELL.

>> THANK YOU.

OBVIOUSLY, YOU'VE ADDRESSED MANY DIFFERENT THINGS AND I APPRECIATE THE HARD WORK YOU DO.

I THINK ONE OF THE THINGS I WANTED TO SAY WHEN LISTENING TO YOU GUYS AND I APPRECIATE CHIEF BARROS GIVING US MORE DATA ON THE COMMERCIAL VACANCES IS THERE ARE SOME NEIGHBORHOODS THAT DON'T HAVE A MAIN STREET, ONE IN MY DISTRICT ACTUALLY.

THERE ARE MAYBE SOME VACANCIES, MAYBE NOT.

MAYBE SOME BUSINESSES WHERE

PEOPLE ARE LIKE, WHAT IS THIS?  
BUT THERE IS ONE PARTICULAR  
SPACE THAT'S BEEN VACANT FOR A  
LONG TIME.

SO I JUST FLAG THAT FOR THE  
AUDIENCE THAT'S VIEWING THIS  
THAT THAT'S A REAL CHALLENGE AND  
I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH  
COUNCILOR O'MALLEY AND COUNCILOR  
FLYNN IN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF  
HOW DO WE COMPILE DATA IN THOSE  
NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE CITY OF  
BOSTON WHO ARE HIGHLY  
RECOMMENDED -- SORRY, WHO ARE  
LISTED IN THE DATA THAT WE GOT  
FOR VACANT LOTS FROM DND BUT  
DON'T HAVE A MAIN STREET, FOR  
EXAMPLE, THOSE ENTREPRENEURIAL  
LEADERS TO GO OUT AND DO THEIR  
WORK THAT YOU GUYS ARE DOING OR  
THAT YOU USED TO DO EVERY SINGLE  
DAY.

SO I WOULD BE PUSHING FOR  
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX FOR  
THOSE COMMUNITIES THAT DON'T  
HAVE THOSE.

ONE THING I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR  
IS, WHEN WE TALK ABOUT  
DISINCENTIVIZING VACANCY, SOME  
OF IT IS FOR PRIVATE OWNERS, AND  
THEN IT'S ALSO FOR THE CITY OF  
BOSTON.

AND ONE THINGS I THINK WE HEARD  
TODAY IS THE LACK OF RESOURCES.  
AND I DON'T LIKE TO ACCEPT NO SO  
I THINK IT'S HOW DO WE THINK  
OUTSIDE THE BOX AND SAY, HOW DO  
WE GO TO PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OR  
THE 1% IN THE CITY OF BOSTON OR  
WHOMEVER TO SAY, WE AS A CITY  
DON'T WANT OUR TO BE VACANT.  
WE WANT TO ACTIVATE THEM IN SOME  
WAY.

DON'T GET ME WRONG.

SOMETIMES IT IS COMMUNITY  
RESIDENTS SAYING, HE DON'T WANT  
THAT WE WANT SOMETHING ELSE.  
BUT I FRANKLY FIND THAT VERY  
RARE.

I THINK IT'S MORE ABOUT WHAT ARE  
PEOPLE GOING TO DO?

AND IS THERE THE REAL POWER DO  
SOMETHING?

SO FOR ME, IF IT'S RESOURCES, I

WOULD LIKE TO HEAR WHAT YOU GUYS  
THINK IN TERMS OF RESOURCES THAT  
MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO ACTIVATE  
THESE SPACES WHETHER IN A  
TEMPORARY MANNER OR SOMETHING  
MORE PERMANENT, PARTICULARLY FOR  
THE CITY-OWNED LOTS.

>> YEAH.

YOU KNOW, I WAS TALKING ABOUT A  
REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX.  
THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO LEVIED  
A VERY IRON TAX ON BOTH  
COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL  
PROPERTIES OVER 5 MILLION.  
LAST YEAR IT RAISED ENOUGH TO  
MAKE IT 44 MILLION, WHICH  
THEY'VE -- THE CITY HAS DEPLOYED  
IN A PARTICULAR WAY.  
BUT THAT'S AN INTERESTING IDEA.  
LET'S LOOK AT BOTH THE  
DISRUPTION CAUSED AND ADD FUNDS  
THAT CAN STRENGTHEN THE  
COMMUNITY.

SO IF IT'S STRENGTHENING  
ENFORCEMENT.

MAKING A LINKAGE BETWEEN THOSE  
REVENUE SOURCES, A HIGH-END  
VACANCY TAX MAYBE THAT EACH  
YEAR, YOU KNOW, SORT OF LIKE  
EACH YEAR A PROPERTY IS VACANT,  
THE RATE GOES UP, SO IT REALLY  
DOES CREATE AN INCENTIVE TO RATE  
OR MOVE THAT PROPERTY.

, THAT REVENUE COULD BE TIED TO  
ENFORCEMENT OR COULD BE TIED TO  
SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES ON PUBLIC  
PROPERTY.

SO LOOKING FOR THOSE LINKS TO  
THE DISRUPTION CAUSED BY  
HIGH-END REAL ESTATE AND SOLVING  
OUR PROBLEMS COULD BE THE WAY TO  
GO.

>> AND I'D LIKE TO THINK WE'RE  
NOT GOING TO TAX OURSELVES ON  
OUR OWN PARCELS, BUT I REFUSE TO  
ACCEPT THAT THERE'S NOT ENOUGH  
RESOURCES IN THE CITY OF BOSTON  
OR THE GREATER BOSTON AREA OR  
THE COMMONWEALTH TO DEAL WITH  
THE CITY-OWNED PARCELS THAT  
PRESENTLY PRESENT AND THAT OFFER  
PROBABLY BLIGHT, BLIGHT AND  
OTHER THINGS IN CERTAIN  
COMMUNITIES, AND I WOULD LOVE --

AND WE'RE GOING TO CONTINUE THIS SFERGS CONVERSATION TO THINK ABOUT WHERE THE RESOURCES MIGHT EXIST, IF IT'S NOT IN THE CITY OF BOSTON, WHO EXTERNAL TO THE CITY AND THE GOVERNMENT IF INTERESTED AND ACTIVATING THESE SPACES, SOME OF THEM ARE DEVELOPERS.

HOW DO YOU INNOCENT ADVISE PEOPLE TO COME TO MATTAPAN WHERE I LIVE WHERE PEOPLE HAVE THIS EXPECTATION OF WHAT MATTAPAN IS ALL ABOUT AND I'M OFTEN PUSHING BACK ON THAT NARRATIVE TO SAY, YOU DON'T KNOW MATTAPAN BECAUSE YOU'VE PROBABLY NOT BEEN THERE OR PARTS OF DORCHESTER EVEN, TO INCENTIVIZE PEOPLE TO COME.

SO I THINK IT'S MULTIFACETED. BUT AS WE CONTINUE THESE CONVERSATIONS, I REALLY ENCOURAGE FOLKS, EVEN THOSE WHO COULDN'T BE HERE TODAY, TO THINK ABOUT HOW DO WE INNOCENT ADVISE FOLKS TO GO TO EVERY PART OF THE CITY OF BOSTON TO MAKE SURE THAT WE'RE DOING SOMETHING THAT HAS -- THAT JUST CHANGES THE FACE OF THESE PROPERTIES AND ACTIVATES -- ACTIVATES THE SPACE.

AND I THINK THE BEST PLACE TO START ARE THE CITY-OWNED PARCELS IN PARTICULAR, BECAUSE WE HAVE THAT DATA.

IT'S READILY AVAILABLE. IT MAY NOT BE AS FRIENDLY TO LOOK AT ON THE WEBSITE, AND I'VE BEEN ON THE WEBSITE.

ALSO SO PEOPLE KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE VACANT LOT THAT'S BEEN SITTING VACANT FOR TEN YEARS.

SO I'D LOVE FOR US TO JUST CONTINUE TO THINK ABOUT THAT. AND IF IS RESOURCES, THEN WHO IN THE HECK IN THIS CITY CAN DO SOMETHING?

THANK YOU, YOU GUYS.

>> THANK YOU.

, COUNCIL PRESIDENT CAMPBELL.

I JUST HAD ONE QUESTION,

MR. COLLINS.

I KNOW YOU HIGHLIGHTED, TALKED ABOUT SHELL CORPORATIONS. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT JUST SO WE GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING. ARE WE TALKING ABOUT OVERSEAS MONEY COMING INTO BOSTON OR ARE THEY USED AS A TAX -- A WAY TO HIDE TAXES OR WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OR WHAT ARE WE SEEING IN BOSTON AS IT RELATES TO A SHELL CORPORATION?

>> YEAH.

MAYBE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, THE GLOBAL FORCES, THERE'S TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS MOVING AROUND THE GLOBE PRETTY MUCH TRYING TO HIDE FROM ACCOUNTABILITY, REPORTING, TAXATION, SO WE DON'T KNOW NECESSARILY WHO OWNS THAT -- WHO OWNS THOSE PROPERTIES BECAUSE THE SHELL CORPORATION DOESN'T REQUIRE ANY DISCLOSURE WHO ACTUALLY BENEFITS FROM THE OWNERSHIP IT.

IF MAY BE -- IT COULD BE REGISTERED IN DELAWARE OR WYOMING OR IT COULD BE REGISTERED IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS OR BERMUDA SO IT COULD BUY OFF-SORE.

-- BE OFFSHORE.

COULD BE LINKED TO BANK ACCOUNTS.

WHAT'S INTERESTING IS IT ACTUALLY THOUGH TOUCHES DOWN. IT -- YOU CAN'T ALL STAY IN THE INVESTMENT MARKET AS COUNCILOR O'MALLEY SAYS.

IT DOESN'T ALL WANT TO STAY IN THE STOCK MARKET.

SOME OF IT WANTS TO LAND IN REAL PROPERTY JUST AS AN ASSET CLASS, AS A WAY TO PROTECT THE WEALTH, AND SO SOLVE THAT GLOBALAL WEALTH AND IT COULD BE RUSSIAN OLIGARCHS , CHINESE MULTIMILLIONAIRES WORRIED ABOUT STATE APPROPRIATION IN THEIR COUNTRY, COULD BE MONEY LAUNDERING FOR ILLEGAL PURPOSES OR LEGAL PURPOSES.

WE DON'T REALLY KNOW BECAUSE THAT'S THE WHOLE HIDDEN NATURE



OF IT.

BUT IT IS PARKING, SOME OF IT IS PARKING HERE IN BOSTON, AND IT'S PARKING IN BUILDINGS THAT WE WALK BY EVERY DAY.

SO WE DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT, AND THAT'S A GLOBAL PROBLEM IN A WAY, YOU THERE ARE CITIES -- BUT THERE ARE CITIES AND LONDON IS INTERESTING IN THIS WAY THAT ARE STARTING TO SAY, ACTUALLY WE WANT TO KNOW WHO OWNS THESE PROPERTIES FROM A MONEY LAUNDERING POINT OF VIEW, FROM A CRIMINAL ACTIVITY CRACKING DOWN ON THAT, AND WE -- REAL ESTATE IS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF OWNERSHIP, AND YOU CAN ACTUALLY REQUIRE DISCLOSURE OF A REAL ESTATE ASSET.

YOU CAN SAY, WHO REALLY IS THE BENEFICIARY HERE?

AND SO LONDON AND SEVERAL OTHER CITIES ARE SAYING, YEAH, YOU WANT TO OWN PROPERTY IN LONDON? YOU HAVE TO TELL US WHO YOU ARE. YOU WANT TO HAVE LEGAL STANDING TO SEE YOUR NEIGHBOR OR EVICT A TENANT OR WHATEVER, YOU NEED TO SAY WHO YOU ARE.

AND WE COULD BE ONE OF THE -- I WOULD SAY THAT ALL THESE POLICIES WE SHOULD LOOK AT WHAT NEW YORK IS DOING, MIAMI, AND ACTUALLY SORT OF LOOK AND MOVING IN TANDEM WITH OTHER CITIES TO THE EXTENT IT'S EVER POSSIBLE TO COORDINATE TO -- TO AT LEAST KEEP TRACK WHAT OTHER CITIES ARE DOING, BECAUSE I THINK WE'RE ALL KIND OF GRAPPLING WITH THESE SAME ISSUES.

>> THANK YOU.

COUNCILOR EDWARDS?

>> THANK YOU.

SO, I HAD A COUPLE SUGGESTIONS OR QUESTIONS AS WELL. FIRST OF ALL, MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE PANEL, INCREDIBLY WELL INFORMED.

I THOUGHT YOUR IDEAS OF WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY WORKING ON IS EXTREMELY HELPFUL SO THANK YOU SO MUCH, AND THANK YOU TO MY

COLLEAGUE, COUNCILOR O'MALLEY,  
FOR YOUR LEADSHIP ON GETTING  
THIS HEARING DONE.

I'M PERSONALLY VERY EXCITED  
ABOUT WHAT I THINK BOSTON CAN  
DO.

A COUPLE THINGS THAT I'D LOVE TO  
SEE OR HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT,  
MAYBE THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE THE  
CONVERSATION IN A WORKING  
SESSION, ONE IS, WHILE WE'RE  
TALKING ABOUT CAUSING FOLKS OR  
BUSINESSES TO PAY, I GUESS,  
THEIR -- THEIR FAIR SHARE AND  
THE BLIGHTS THEY'RE BRINGING TO  
THE COMMUNITY AND THE  
INCENTIVIZING THE VACYANCEY, IS  
THERE ANY THOUGHT OR MOVE FROM  
TIME TO TIME CITIES -- AND I DO  
SUPPORT SOME FORM OF THAT, BUT  
IS THERE ANY THOUGHT OR ANY  
RESEARCH THAT YOU'VE DONE THAT  
SHOWED CITIES THAT MIGHT BE  
PROVIDING TAX RELIEF TO SOMEONE  
TO GET THEM TO DO SOMETHING,  
MAYBE A POP-UP OR SOMETHING LIKE  
THAT?

IS THERE -- HAS THERE BEEN ANY  
PUSH TO SAY, OKAY, SO YOUR LOCAL  
PROPERTY TAXES ARE DUE, WE'VE  
RECEIVED SEVERAL COMPLAINTS  
ABOUT THIS BEING A VACANT SPOT,  
SINCE YOU'RE ALREADY CURRENT ON  
YOUR TAXES, AND AGAIN THAT WAS  
ONE OF THE BIGGEST ISSUES IS  
PEOPLE WHO ARE PAYING THEIR  
TAXES AND THERE'S NO REAL  
PROBLEM WITH THE PROPERTY, THAT  
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GET UNDER  
THE CITY'S ATTENTION BUT THE  
PROBLEM IS THAT NOTHING'S  
HAPPENING FOR US.

IS THERE -- HAS THERE BEEN AN  
INCENTIVE OR HAVE WE SEEN IN ANY  
OTHER CITY, OKAY, YOU'RE PAYING  
TAXES BUT WOULDN'T YOU WANT SOME  
PROPERTY TAX RELIEF BY PUTTING  
SOME BUSINESS IN THERE, A  
POP-UP?

HAS THERE BEEN ANY EXAMPLES OF  
THAT?

>> I HAVEN'T SEEN THAT.  
THAT'S A REALLY GOOD IDEA.  
NK YOU.

SO MAYBE SOMETHING WE COULD  
TALK ABOUT IN A WORKING SESSION.  
ANOTHER NAUGHT FOR -- AND I  
REALLY LOVE THE POP-UP IDEA.  
I'M PART OF A MARTIAL ARTS GROUP  
THAT'S ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A  
STOREFRONT TO BE ABLE TO HOUSE  
OURSELVES, AND PART OF MY  
CURIOSITY ABOUT THE BUSINESSES  
THAT YOU'RE FINDING AND THE  
STOREFRONT THAT MIGHT BE  
AVAILABLE IS DO WE HAVE A  
MEET-UP ONLINE?

IS THERE A PLACE WHERE SOMEONE  
COULD LIVE -- LIST THEIR VACANT  
PROPERTY AND A PLACE WHERE LOCAL  
NONPROFITS OR ARTS OR KIDS OR  
ORGANIZATIONS CAN ALSO BE  
THERE -- ALMOST LIKE A MATCH OR  
A TINDER OR SOMETHING THAT WE  
CAN --

[ LAUGHTER ]

-- MATCH THESE TWO TOGETHER?  
DO YOU THINK THE CITY COULD  
SUPPORT THAT OR MAYBE MAIN  
STREETS COULD BE PART OF  
INITIATING THAT SO THAT WE'RE  
GETTING THOSE STORE FRONTS  
AGAIN THAT ARE CURRENT ON  
PROPERTY NOT QUITE IN THE BLIGHT  
LEVEL BUT ARE AVAILABLE AND NOT  
BEING USED?

>> I THINK THAT WE STARTED  
SOMETHING LIKE THAT, BUT IT  
WASN'T -- THERE'S LOTS OF  
TURNOVER WITH MAIN STREET  
DIRECTORS AND SOMETIMES THINGS  
DON'T GO AS PLANNED.

>> THAT'S A DIFFERENT TOPIC.  
BUT YEAH, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE  
A TINDER APP KIND OF MATCH UP.  
>> MATCH.COM.

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.  
BUT MAIN STREET BY MAIN STREET.  
I KIND OF WANTED TO FOLLOW UP A  
LITTLE BIT ON MY LAST QUESTION  
ON COUNCILOR FLYNN'S QUESTIONING  
ABOUT THE GLOBAL MARKET AND  
WHAT'S HAPPENING.

AND I KNOW NEW YORK WHEN IT  
COMES TO SOME OF THE VACANCY OR  
UNOCCUPIED UNITS, THEY FOLLOWED  
THEIR CRIMINAL STATUTES IN  
LOOKING AT AND BEGAN

INVESTIGATING WHO OWNS SOME OF THAT PROPERTY BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT IT WAS USED AS MONEY LAUNDERING BY SOME RUSSIAN OLIGARCHS AND THE FACT IS IT'S A WONDERFUL WAY TO HIDE YOUR MONEY AND ALSO INFLATE THE HOUSING CRISIS BECAUSE YOU'RE INCENTIVIZED TO POP AS MUCH MONEY INTO IT SO YOU WANT TO BUY IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BECAUSE YOU WANT YOUR MONEY TO BE KEPT SAFE AND THEN THE BUILDING OR WHATEVER.

AND SO I'M CURIOUS IN YOUR RESEARCH ABOUT MASSACHUSETTS CRIMINAL -- I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE LOOKED AT OUR STATUTE. IS THERE A WAY WE CAN GO CRIMINALLY IN TERMS OF INVESTIGATING TO GET BEHIND THAT VEILED WALL FROM LLCs AND STUFF AND CORPORATIONS?

>> THAT'S A GREAT QUESTION. AND I WILL DEFINITELY LOOK INTO THAT, BECAUSE CLEARLY, IN NEW YORK, IT'S BEEN PART OF BEING SUCH A GLOBALIZED ECONOMY, GLOBALIZED CITY, THE FBI AND OTHER NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HAVE SPENT A LOT OF THE TIME IN NEW YORK.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE PARALLEL HERE IN BOSTON.

>> OKAY.

BUT I'LL LOOK INTO THAT BECAUSE I THINK IT MIGHT BE --

>> YEAH.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU.

THANK YOU.

I'D LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU TO THE PANEL FOR BEING HERE, FOR YOUR TESTIMONY.

IT WAS VERY INFORMATIVE AND VERY HELPFUL.

WE'RE GOING TO TAKE PUBLIC COMMENTS NOW.

I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO STAY FOR THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.

BUT I JUST WANT TO ON BEHALF OF MY COLLEAGUES SAY THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE.

>> THANK YOU.  
AND COUNT US IN FOR THE WORKING  
GROUP.

>> THANK YOU.  
AND AT THIS PUBLIC HEARING,  
I'M GOING TO CALL THREE PEOPLE  
AT A TIME.  
AND IF YOU WANT TO COME DOWN TO  
THE MICROPHONE ON THE LEFT OR  
THE MICROPHONE ON THE RIGHT,  
STARTING WITH STEPHANIE --  
STARTING WITH DANIELLE JOSEPH.  
AND ALSO ANTHONY GEE DANO, IF  
YOU COULD FOLLOW AFTER HER.  
AND IF I'M PROANNOUNCING IT  
RIGHT, PANELLA SCHWARTZ?

>> HI, EVERYONE.  
I'M DANIELLE JOSEPH.  
THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS  
HEARING.  
WE ARE JUST HAPPY TO BE PART OF  
THIS CONVERSATION.  
WE FIND IT IMPORTANT TO ADDRESS  
THE COMMERCIAL VACANCY ISSUE IN  
OUR DISTRICT AND THROUGHOUT  
BOSTON.

WE AGREE THAT LONG-TERM  
VACANCIES DAMAGE THE  
AVAILABILITY FOR OUR BUSINESS  
DISTRICT TO THRIVE.  
WE ARE COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH  
THE CITY, LANDLORDS, EXISTING  
AND PROSPECTIVE BUSINESSES,  
RESIDENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS  
TO PROMOTE THE VIBE RANSY OF OUR  
MAIN STREET.

WE APPRECIATE THE COUNCIL FOR  
LOOKING INTO THIS ISSUE AND  
FINDING WAYS TO COLLECT DATA  
AND INCENTIVIZE OUR LOCAL  
LANDLORDS.

WE'D LOVE TO BE PART OF A  
CONTINUED CONVERSATION IN THE  
WORKING GROUPS IN THE FUTURE,  
AND WE THANK THE OTHER MAIN  
STREET DIRECTORS FOR BEING HERE  
TODAY.

>> THANK YOU.  
AND FOR THE RECORD, COULD YOU  
STATE YOUR NAME AND YOUR  
ADDRESS, PLEASE?

>> SURE.  
MY NAME'S ANTHONY GIORDANO,  
PRESIDENT OF HARVEY MASS, VERY

CLOSELY, I'M ALSO A RELATIVELY  
NEW LANDLORD IN ROSLINDALE  
VILLAGE MYSELF.  
AND I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD  
TO ALL THE IDEAS THAT ARE COMING  
FORTH HERE.  
THE ONLY THING I WANT TO SAY IS  
THAT FINDING A GOOD TENANT IS  
DIFFICULT.  
AND MAKING THAT MATCH IS  
EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.  
THERE'S A LOT OF WORK THAT GOES  
ON TO ACTUALLY GET TO THAT  
POINT.  
SO I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO  
EVERYTHING THAT YOU GUYS CAN DO  
TO HELP US OUT NEXT TIME,  
BECAUSE YOU DO ONE AND THREE  
YEARS LATER, YOU'RE BACK WHERE  
YOU STARTED.  
SO THANK YOU.  
>> THANK YOU VERY MUCH.  
, SIR.  
AND I'D LIKE TO CALL DOWN  
ANYONE ELSE THAT WOULD LIKE TO  
TESTIFY.  
I DO HAVE SOME NAMES, BUT WE CAN  
GO IN ORDER.  
IS THERE A PAMELA SCHWARTZ?  
MEG?  
MEG FROM THE BACK BAY  
ASSOCIATION?  
OKAY.  
AND DAVID COUGHLIN?  
JUST WALK TO THE MICROPHONE,  
SIR.  
YOU CAN START.  
STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS,  
PLEASE.  
>> I'M DAN AND I'M AT 43 LORDSAV.  
SO I'M HERE BECAUSE OF SOME OF  
THE GREAT WORK THAT COUNCILOR  
O'MALLEY HELPED US WITH.  
I WAS ONE OF THE TENANTS AT 128  
BROOKSIDE WHICH WAS OF THE LAST  
FREESTANDING ARTIST BUILDING IN  
JAMAICA PLAINS.  
THAT HOUSED WORK-ONLY SPACES.  
MOST OF THE ARTISTS IN THAT  
BUILDING, THERE WAS 22 OF US,  
THAT HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY A  
LANDLORD WHO CAME IN TO  
BASICALLY LEAVE THE PROPERTY  
VACANT.

HE HASN'T SUBMITTED ANY PLANS TO MY KNOWLEDGE FOR -- TO THE CITY FOR BUILDING.

AND THIS IS AN ISSUE.

IT'S AN ISSUE FOR ARTISTS.

THE NEW SPACE I'M IN IN DORCHESTER AND RECENTLY INVESTORS CAME TO LOOK AT THAT PROPERTY AS WELL.

ARTS IN THIS CITY IS IMPORTANT TO THE VITALIZATION AND THE REVITALIZATION OF CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS, AND THERE'S NO BUILDINGS LEFT TO DO THAT. TO SPEAK TO COUNCILOR EDWARDS, PHILADELPHIA DID ACTUALLY HAVE A REVITALIZATION PROGRAM WHERE THEY INVITED ARTISTS TO SET UP STUDIOS SORT OF LIKE A POP-UP, BUT ARTIST STUDIOS IN THAT SPACE.

THERE WAS TAX BREAKS TO THE PROPERTY OWNER FOR ALLOWING ARTISTS TO WORK IN THAT SPACE. THE ARTISTS LEFT THE SPACE BETTER THAN IT ACTUALLY WAS IN THE BEGINNING.

THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAINT AND UPKEEP AND THAT SORT OF THING WHILE THEY WERE THERE. I'M JUST REALLY APPRECIATIVE THAT WE'RE GETTING THIS CONVERSATION STARTED.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU.

MY NAME IS MARTIN.

I'M CHAIR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION FOR THE BACK BAY BUT I'M REPRESENTING AN OFFICIAL POSITION HERE.

A NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS BASED UPON CONVERSATIONS THAT WE'VE HAD AMONG OUR MEMBERS.

THE FIRST POINT I'D LIKE TO MAKE IS THAT WE MAKE A CLEAR DISTIMPGS BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AND IN TERMS OF RESIDENTIAL, ONE DALTON PLACE IS IN THE BACK BAY AND THAT'S AN ILLUSTRATION OR ONE OF THE CHALLENGES THAT WE FACE.

ONE OF THE THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE DO IS TO FIGURE OUT

HOW WHEN SOMEBODY WHO OWNS A PLACE IN ONE DALTON PLACE IS ACTUALLY THERE AND THEN IF WE CAN SNEAK PAST SECURITY AND PERSUADE THEM TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION OF THE BACK BAY --

[ LAUGHTER ]

-- AND JOIN IN ALL OUR FUN ACTIVITIES LIKE CLEANING UP THE ALLEYS, REMOVING GRASS FIGHTY AND SO -- GRAFFITI AND SO FORTH. WE COULDN'T PROMISE THEM THE MOST EXPENSIVE CHAMPAGNE IF THEY ASSIST US IN THOSE ACTIVITIES. ANOTHER ASPECT OF THIS IN THE RESIDENTIAL SENSE IS, OF COURSE, THE FUTURE OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS, WHICH I KNOW A VOTE IS SUPPOSEDLY TO BE TAKEN TOMORROW IN THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING. AND I'D LIKE TO DRAW HERE UPON EXPERIENCES IN BERLIN.

THAT'S BERLIN, GERMANY, NOT BERLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE. BECAUSE IN THIS ENDEAVOR, WE HAVE DONE OUR BEST WITH EITHER FIBERHOOD ASSOCIATIONS IN BOSTON TO DRAW UPON EXPERIENCES AND ATTEMPTS BY CITIES NOT ONLY THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA BUT ALSO AROUNDED WORLD AS TO WHAT TO DO.

AND ONE OF THE OBSERVATIONS IN BERLIN WAS THEY PASSED ONE SET OF REGULATIONS THAT WERE PRETTY STRICT AND THEN REALIZED THAT THAT WASN'T WORKING. THEY TOOK A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF UNITS BACK INTO THE MARKET AND THEN THE SAME NUMBER OF UNITS POPPED UP BECAUSE PEOPLE WERE HOLDING THEM FOR HOPES OF A FUTURE PROFIT.

SO ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WAS THEN DECIDED WAS TO INTRODUCE SOME VERY, VERY HARSH FINES. IN FACT, THE MAXIMUM FINE IF YOU WERE VACAPARTMENT FOR TOO LONG WHICH IS ACTUALLY I THINK A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS RATHER THAN SIX MONTHS , IS 500,000 EUROS, WHICH IS ABOUT \$670,000, I THINK AT THE CURRENT EXCHANGE



RATE.

SO THAT'S ONE SET OF ISSUES.  
THE OTHER ONE IS COMMERCIAL  
PROPERTIES.

AND THERE, OUR MAJOR CONCERN AT  
THE BACK BAY IS WITH NEWBERRY  
STREET WHICH AS YOU KNOW IS  
SUFFERING NOT ONLY FROM LOCAL  
ISSUES BECAUSE, IN FACT, IT  
TURNS OUT NA A NUMBER OF  
BUSINESSES HAVE MOVED TO OTHER  
PARTS OF THE CITY, WHICH IS NOT  
NECESSARILY BAD FOR BOSTON LIKE  
THE SOUTH END, A NUMBER OF  
GALLERIES, SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE  
INTERESTED IN GOING TO THE  
SEAPORT OR EVEN DOWNTOWN  
CRESCENT BUT ALSO THE FACT THAT  
THE GLOBAL FORCES THAT ARE  
AFFECTING BRICK AND MORTAR  
RETAIL STORES EVERYWHERE.  
NOW, WHAT OUR CONCERN THERE  
WOULD BE WHAT WOULD BE THE  
IMPACT IF VACANCY FINDS AND  
RECENTLY DON'T KNOW.

WE HOPE FOR EXAMPLE ONE OF THE  
ASPECTS OF THE SHORT-TERM RENTAL  
EVEN THOUGH IT PLIES TO  
RESIDENTIAL IS ONE WOULD TAKE  
ACCOUNT AND GO BACK REGSLY AFTER  
SIX MONTHS OR A YEAR AND SEE  
WHAT -- AND SEE WHAT IS GOING  
ON.

BUT IT WILL DEPEND UPON AT LOT  
OF DEVILISH DETAILS.

HOW LARGE ARE THE FINE, HOW  
THEY'RE APPLIED, HOW THEY'RE  
ENFORCED AND SO FORTH.

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT IT DOES  
PLAY A ROLE IN PLUMMETS WHICH  
DOES SEEM TO BE A FACTOR FOR  
BUSINESS.

WE HAVE A LICENSING BUILDING USE  
COMMITTEE, AN ARCHITECTURE  
COMMITTEE, WHICH WILL USE  
PROJECTS THAT ARE PUT FORWARD TO  
US, WHETHER IT'S A RESTAURANT  
WHERE A RETAIL STORE OR  
WHATEVER, AND GENERALLY  
SPEAKING, WE DEAL WITH IT FAIRLY  
RAPIDLY ONCE THE PROJECT IS  
KNOWN TO US.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, WE'RE  
AWARE OF THE FACT THAT PEOPLE

ARE CONCERNED THAT THE PERMITTING PROCESS TAKES TOO LONG.

AND WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IS A MUCH MORE COOPERATIVE VENTURE WORKING TOGETHER BETWEEN OURSELVES, BUSINESSES, AND DEVELOPERS, THE BACK BAY ASSOCIATION, AND NEWBERRY STREET LINK TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM, BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH WE ARE REALLY OUR MISSION IS TO HELP RESIDENTS, WE RECORD RECOGNIZE HAVING A VIBRANT COMMERCIAL DISTRICT IS GOOD FOR RESIDENTS.

IN FACT, A UNMOVED RESIDENTS ARE OWNERS OR WORK IN SOME OF THESE BUSINESSES.

SO WE HOPE THAT WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIND

SOME SOLUTIONS.

AS A FINAL REMARK I WOULD JUST SAY THAT GENERALLY MY EXPERIENCE IN LIFE HAS BEEN YOU CAN GET SO FAR WITH STICKS BUT IT ALSO HELPS TO HAVE SOME CARROTS AND WE KNOW THAT BOSTON AND THE STATE AND COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS GIVE LARGE INCENTIVES TO VERY BIG BUSINESSES TO COME HERE AND DO THINGS.

AND WE WISH THAT THERE WERE A WAY OF FINDING THE EQUIVALENT TO GIVE TO SMALL BUSINESSES TO OVERCOME -- HELP OVERCOME SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT THEY ENCOUNTER HAD, FOR EXAMPLE, SETTING UP A NEWBERRY STREET. I'VE HAD SOME DISCUSSIONS WITH PEOPLE ABOUT HOW MUCH REVENUE THEY NEED TO BE ABLE TO DEVELOP IN ORDER TO MAKE IT WORTHWHILE PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE VERY HIGH RENTS.

AND WE DO KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE SOME VERY MANIERS WHO HAVE -- DEVELOPERS WHO HAVE OWNERS WHO HAVE VERY LARGE BUILDINGS AND THEY'RE NOT WILLING TO GIVE LONG LEASES TO PEOPLE, BUSINESSES WHO ONLY TAKE UP A SMALL PART OF THAT BUILDING

BECAUSE THEY'RE BIDDING THEIR  
TIME HOPING THAT SOME BIG  
COMPANY -- WHO KNOWS, AMAZON --  
MAY COME AND TAKE THE SWHOL SHA  
BANNING AT ONCE.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, SIR.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TESTIMONY.

STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS  
PLEASE.

>> MY NAME'S JOHN BOOKSTONE.  
I LIVE AT 185 MASS AVENUE ACROSS  
FROM BERKELEY AND CHRISTIAN  
SCIENCE CHURCH.

I'M A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF  
FENWAY CIVIC ASSOCIATION, BUT  
I'M NOT SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF  
THE ASSOCIATION HERE.

THE BOTTOM LINE IN THIS ISSUE IS  
EXACTLY THE SAME AS WITH AIRBNB  
AND OTHER SHORT TERM RENTALS.

WE ARE DESTROYING OUR  
NEIGHBORHOODS BY ALLOWING PEOPLE  
TO COME IN, BUILD ONE DALTON IF  
YOU WISH, TAKE OVER BUILDINGS IN  
CHINATOWN AND RENT THEM OUT BY  
THE DAY, WHATEVER IT IS THEY'RE  
DOING, THEY ARE RUINING OUR  
NEIGHBORHOODS.

PEOPLE CAN NO LONGER -- WHO WORK  
IN THE CITY AND HAVE A  
REQUIREMENT TO LIVE IN THE CITY,  
THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO LIVE IN THE  
CITY ANYMORE.

I'M A DILL DISMAYED THAT THE  
OTHER COUNCILORS AREN'T HERE.  
PLEASE PASS ON THESE SERIOUS  
CONCERNS THAT HAVE BEEN GOING ON  
FOR A LONG TIME TO THE OTHER  
COUNCILORS AND THE CITY HAS  
DISAPPEAR PIMED DELIGHTED THAT  
ARLINGTON HAS WONDERFUL IDEAS.  
I TAUGHT IN ARLINGTON FOR NINE  
YEARS.

AND I'M GOING TO WARN ARLINGTON  
THAT IF THEY'RE NOT CAREFUL,  
THEY ARE GOING TO HAVE A  
TERRIBLE PROBLEM WITH INVESTORS  
BUYING PROPERTY ALONG MASS  
AVENUE, TAKING THOSE PROPERTIES  
AND RENTING THEM OUT BY THE  
NIGHT AT \$400 A NIGHT, HAVING --  
TELLING PEOPLE THAT THEY CAN  
TAKE THE 77 -- 79 BUS TO -- TO

THE RED LINE "T" AND GET INTO BOSTON IN NO TIME AT A SINGLE FARE AND WE'RE JUST PUSHING THE PROBLEM FARTHER AND FARTHER OUT. WE NEED TO PUT A STOP TO THESE BUSINESSES RUINING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR HEARING.

>> THANK YOU, SIR.

GO AHEAD, SIR, IF YOU'D STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, PLEASE.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK AT THE MEETING.

MY NAME IS MIKE JANON.

I'M A RESIDENT OF THE BACK BAY, COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, A PRINCIPAL OF URBAN MARTASH, INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMPANY.

FOR THE PAST 12 YEARS, URBAN MARTASH HAS INVESTED ON ITS OWN AND ON BEHALF OF ITS CLIENTS OVER \$500 MILLION.

AND HAS BEEN INVOLVED OF THE OWNERSHIP OF OVER 40 BUILDS.

MY COMMENTS REALLY SPECIFICALLY TO NEWBERRY STREET AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS TO APPLYING TO OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS.

I'M GOING TO SAY SOME NAMES NOW.

STEVEN ALAN, JONATHAN ALBER, AMERICAN APPAREL, ALL OF THESE RETAILERS LEFT OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS.

NONE OF THEM LEFT BECAUSE THE RENT WAS TOO HIGH.

THE ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE A VACANCY IS SIMPLY NOT VALID ON NEW BERRY STREET.

RENTS ARE FUNCTION OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

THESE TAILORS LEFT US THAT THEY WERE CLOSING ALL OR MOST OF THE STORES NATIONALLY.

NONE OF THESE THESE RETAILERS ACTUALLY PERFORMED WELL ON NEWBERRY STREET BUT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE A SINGLE STORE.

THIS WAS FOR THE MOST PART INFLECTED BY RETAILERS AS THEY OVER-EXPANDED -- OVER EXPANDED.

NEWBERRY STREET WAS PART OF THE

COLLATERAL DAMAGE NOT THE CAUSE OF IT.  
AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE EFFECT OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND ON NEWBERRY STREET, IN 2008-2009 AS PART OF THE GREAT RECESSION, THERE WERE NO, I REPEAT NO, RETAIL SPACE. RENT COULD HAVE DROPPED BY 50% AND IT WOULDN'T HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE AS THERE WAS NO DEMAND FOR SPACE.  
FORTUNATELY, THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT.  
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME A RETAIL SPACE IN THE CORRECTION WITH THE ECONOMY STRONG.  
THIS RESULTS IN VACANCY BEING FILLED MORE QUICKLY BUT THE RECOVERY WILL TAKE SOME TIME. IT WILL NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT. RETAILERS NOW MORE THAN EVER ARE EXTREMELY PARTICULAR WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING SPACE.  
WE HAVE FIVE RETAILERS COMPETING TO LEASE A SPACE.  
UNFORTUNATELY, WE'LL BE ABLE TO CHOOSE ONLY ONE TO FILL THE SPACE.  
THIS DOESN'T MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT THE FOUR OTHER RETAILERS WILL END UP ON OTHER SPACES ON NEWBERRY.  
THIS PARTICULAR SPACE WORKS WELL FOR THESE USERS AND IT'S ABOUT THE RIGHT SIZE, LOCATION AND THE RIGHT COTENANCY FOR THE RETAIL. OTHERS DO NOT FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS RETAILER. UNLIKE A MALL, WE SIMPLY CAN'T DEVISE A MALL TO MAKE A 1400-SQUARE-FOOT SPACE OR OTHER BECAUSE WE'RE RESTRICT BIT DIMENSIONS OF THE BUILDING.  
FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS, THEY SIGNED A LEASE IN DECEMBER 2015 AND IT TOOK ALMOST 30 MONTHS OF CONDRUCKS BETWEEN THE IMPROVEMENTS BEFORE THEY WERE READY TO OPEN.  
AN EXAMPLE OF THE RETAIL AND THE MOST EXCITING ADDITION IN YEARS, IT WAS -- THIS IS THEIR 100th STORE.  
COMMERCE SPACES INCLUDE THE --

THIS IS THE [ INAUDIBLE ].  
THESE RETAILERS ARE ALL NEW TO  
NEWBERRY STREET AND HAVE OPENED  
OR WILL BE OPEN BETWEEN NOW AND  
MID-2019.

SOME OF THESE CONCEPTS DIDN'T  
EXIST FIVE YEARS AGO.

ALL OF THESE RETAILERS TAKE  
SIGNIFICANT TIME IN CHOOSING  
LOCATIONS AND BUILDING THEIR  
STORES.

THERE IS A LIGHT AT END OF THE  
TUNNEL AND IT ISN'T A FREIGHT  
TRAIN.

NEWBERRY STREET IS SUCCESSFUL  
BECAUSE OF THE RETAILERS IT IS  
ABLE TO ATTRACT, RETAILERS THAT  
SHARE A SIMILAR CUSTOMER BASE  
LIKE TO CONGREGATE TOGETHER.

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS PAD GONE  
YA.

BOSTON SPORTS CARDS, SLT, MOTION  
FITNESS, ARE ALSO ON THIS BLOCK.  
IS ANEL, TIFFANY, VALENTINO,  
CARTIER, NONE OF THESE WOULD  
EVER DREAM OF MOVING TO ANOTHER  
BLOCK.

WHEN VACANT SPACES ARE FILLED  
HAPHAZARDLY, THE DAMAGE CAN TAKE  
YEARS TO REPAIR AS FIVE TO  
TEN-YEAR LEASES.

SOME VACANT SPACE FOR SMOKE  
SHOPS.

THERE ARE FOUR OF THEM ON  
NEWBERRY STREET.

I GET A CALL OR TWO OR A WEEKLY  
BASIS FOREOTHER SPACE.

NONE OF THE RETAILERS WANT TO BE  
NEXT TO A SMOKE SHOP AS PART OF  
THEIR CO-10 ANSI.

-- COTENANCY.

AS A PROPERTY OWNER, WE MAKE THE  
CHOICE NOT TO TAKE THE DOLLAR  
THESE USES.

SHOULD WE OR ANY OTHER LANDLORD  
BE PENALIZED FOR THIS DECISION?  
LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME NUMBERS.  
NEWBERRY STREET CONSISTS OF 342  
STORE FRORNTS AND 91% OCCUPIED.  
THAT IS AN IMPROVEMENT FROM 87%  
OCCUPIED IN JANUARY.

IT STILL MEANS THERE ARE  
APPROXIMATELY 30 VACANCIES ON  
THE STREET THOUGH, WHICH IF YOU

COMPARE THE ACTUAL SIZE OF  
NEWBERRY STREET LOOKS LIKE A  
LOT.

MOST OF THE VACANCY IS  
CONCENTRATED ON TWO BLOCKS, ONE  
OF WHICH HAS A CONCENTRATION OF  
SMOKE SHOPS.

HISTORICALLY, WE SEE INCREASE IN  
JANUARY THROUGH MARCH AS IT'S A  
LOW POINT IN THE SHOPPING SEASON  
FOR CONSUMERS.

LEASES ARE TIMED THIS WAY AND  
IT'S THE IDEAL TIME FOR NEW  
RETAILERS TO FILL OUT THEIR  
SPACE.

WITHOUT THIS CONTEXT, A WALK  
DURING THIS TIME IT TO IDENTIFY  
VACANCY OR POINT OUT MARKET IS  
MESS LEAD.

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 50 STORE  
FRONTS IN THE PRUDENTIAL CENTER  
AND 55 IN COPLEY PLACE.

THAT MAKES THE NUMBER OF STORE  
FRONTS ON NEWBERRY STREET  
APPROXIMATELY THREE TIMES THE  
NUMBER OF STORE FROPTS ON THE  
PRUDENTIAL MALL AND COPLEY  
COMBINED.

IT CONSISTS OF EIGHT BLOCKS.  
ROW RODEO DRIVE ARE THREE  
BLOCKS.

OUR VISION OF NEWBERRY STREET IS  
TO PROVIDE SOMETHING FOR  
EVERYONE, WHETHER IT'S JEWELRY  
FROM TIFFANY OR A \$5 ITEM FROM  
TJ MAX.

EVERYBODY CAN ENJOY THE  
ATMOSPHERE, THE PEOPLE WATCHING,  
THE ARCHITECTURE OR EXPERIENCE  
IT AT NO COST.

OUR IDEA OF RETAILERS WILL  
LOCATE THEIR AREA STORES ON  
NEWBERRY.

THIS DIFFERENTIATES THE  
EXPERIENCE ON NEWBERRY FROM THE  
URBAN AND SUBURBAN MALL, WE ALSO  
EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT POP-UP  
CONCEPTS TO FILL VACANT SPACES  
AND EBB ENERGIZE THE STREET AND  
HAVE CONVERTED SOME OF THESE  
TEMPORARY RETAILERS TO LONG-TERM  
LEASES.

IF THE CITY IS LOOKING TO FILL  
THE VACANT SPACES WITH THE RIGHT

RETAIL SPERS WANTS TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE LANDLORDS WHY NOT PROVIDE A CREDIT TO REAL ESTATE TASK FORCE A YEAR OR TWO WHEN A SPACE GETS FILLED THIS DIRECTLY BENEFITS THE RETAILERS DURING THE CRITICAL PERIOD FOR RELOCATION. THE IDEA OF PENALIZING LANDLORDS CAN ONLY LEAD TO POOR OR RASH DECISIONS IN LEASING SPACES TO RETAILERS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE RELOCATION.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

>> THANK YOU, SIR, FOR YOUR TESTIMONY.

PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME FOR THE RECORD AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD YOU LIVE IN.

>> 190 GREEN STREET.

SO I'M AROUND THE CORNER FROM 128 BROOKSIDE, I THE ARTIST WHO SPOKE EARLIER SPOKE OF, ALSO ACROSS THE STREET FROM 197 GREEN STRAIGHT STREET, WHICH IS CURRENTLY VACANT AND 3350 WASHINGTON STREET WHICH IS ALSO VACANT.

AND I GUESS I WANT TO FOCUS A LITTLE BIT ON 197 GREEN.

THAT'S A STORY THAT YOU FOLKS SHOULD HEAR IN CONSIDER CANNING VACANCY.

SO IT'S BEEN VACANT FOR TWO YEARS, SINCE 2016, PRESUMABLY THE CURRENT PURCHASER REQUIRING IT TO BE VACANT TO PURCHASE IT. AND AS A RESULT OF WHAT I WOULD SAY IS A TRANSACTION, MY NEIGHBORS AREN'T NEIGHBORS ANYMORE.

THERE'S A COUPLE LOW-INCOME PEOPLE OF COLOR LIVE THERE, HAVE BARBECUES, WERE REALLY AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

I STILL SEE THEM ON THE STREET SOMETIMES WHEN THEY COME BY TO TALK TO FOLKS ON THE STREET BUT THEY LIVE FAR OUT I BELIEVE IN MATTAPAN OR FURTHER OUT.

AND THE SAD THING IS THEY COULD HAVE BEEN LIVING THERE FOR THE



PAST TWO YEARS.

RIGHT?

THEY COULD STILL BE THERE RIGHT NOW IF IT WEREN'T FOR SORT OF THIS SPECULATIVE IMPETUS, SORT OF FORCING THEM OUT.

SO I GUESS KIND OF TO ECHO WHAT CHUCK WAS SAYING AND OTHERS WERE SAYING, THERE ARE BOTH MONETARY COSTS AND ALSO SOCIAL COSTS TO THE SPECULATION AND THE VACANCY THAT WE'RE SEEING.

IN PARTICULAR, THE SOCIAL COST OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, LOW-INCOME FOLKS THAT LIVE IN BOSTON, THAT WORK IN BOSTON, ARE SEEING THEIR COMMUNITIES TORN APART EVERY DAY BY THESE FORCES THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ADDRESS, IN A SMALL PART WITH THIS CONSIDER CANATION OF DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO VACANCY .

SO I GUESS, YOU KNOW, THE NEIGHBOR WHO IS NEXT DOOR TO SOME -- WHAT I WOULD CONSIDER THE 197 GREEN STREET PARCEL IS BLIGHTED, I WOULD SAY.

THE OTHER IS MAYBE NOT SO MUCH, BUT THEY'VE BEEN VACANT FOR MANY, MANY YEARS.

AND IT -- IT'S A BUMMER.

AND ACTUALLY, THE OTHER PLACE IS VACANT FOR I THINK OVER A YEAR, AND I KNEW THE PREVIOUS OWNERS, AND THEY BASICALLY WERE -- THEY LEFT BECAUSE OF RENT SPECULATION.

SO IT TOOK A WHILE FOR THAT BUILDING TO BE NOT VACANT AGAIN. SO WHAT'S FUNNY IS THAT EVEN THOUGH OUR ECONOMY IS DOING GREAT, THERE'S ALL THESE SMALL BUSINESSES IN THEORY THAT WOULD BE MOVING TO MY NEIGHBORHOOD THAT ACTUALLY -- THERE ARE MORE VACANCIES NOW THAN THERE WERE DURING THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN MY SPECIFIC BLOCK AND THAT'S SAD TO ME.

SO I GUESS JUST TO CLOSE, I WOULD REALLY -- I URGE YOU TO CONSIDER THE COST TO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND OUR SOCIAL FABRIC THAT THESE VACANCIES ARE

HAVING.

AND I THINK THE INCENTIVES OR THE FINES SHOULD BE SUBSTANTIAL AND IN LINE WITH THOSE COSTS. SO WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO THE \$400 VACANCY REGISTRATION FEE IN ARLINGTON, I DON'T THINK THAT'S REALLY GOING TO DO THE TRICK IN BOSTON.

I FEEL LIKE IT NEEDS TO BE A MUCH MORE SUBSTANTIAL FINE THAT ACTUALLY INCENTIVIZES PEOPLE TO DO THE RIGHT THING WITH THE PROPERTY TO TURN IT OVER OR SELL IT OR WHATEVER THEY NEED TO DO TO MAKE THAT -- SORT OF MAKE THAT -- THAT VACANT SPACE DO SOMETHING FOR NEIGHBORS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

AND/OR MAYBE USE SOME OF THOSE -- THE OTHER PIECE THAT I WOULD SAY IS THERE ARE FIRMS THAT ARE LEVY -- FINES THAT ARE LEVIED FROM SOME KIND OF TAX OR WHATEVER THAT THOSE BE USED TO DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE VACANCY ISSUE AND DIRECTLY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THOSE COMMUNITIES BECAUSE FOLKS ARE JUST GETTING SLAMMED RIGHT NOW.

THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, SIR.

PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND WHERE YOU LIVE, SIR.

>> SURE.

MY NAME IS CHRIS.

I'M A RESIDENT OF 100 IN THE BACK BAY.

LONG AFTERNOON.

I'LL TRY TO KEEP THIS BRIEF.

I'M A THIRD-GENERATION PROPERTY OWNER/OPERATOR IN BOSTON.

AT PRESENT MY COMPANY MANAGES 22 BUILDINGS, OWNS AND MANAGES 22 BUILDINGS IN THE BACK BAY, 4 ON THE SOUTH END, AND 2 ON BEACON HILL.

EVEN AS WE SAID, LEASING HAS SEEN AN UPTICK IN RECENT MONTHS WE'RE STILL IN TRANSITION.

AS MY COMPANY HAS FEW VACANCIES WE HAVE THIS PROBLEM PROPERTIES THAT HAVE SAT VACANT FOR LONGER

THAN ANYBODY ANTICIPATED.  
BEFORE A TENANT LEAVES, I DO MY  
BEST TO GLOSSY TERMS FOR  
THEM TO STAY AND THAT INCLUDES  
REDUCING THEIR CURRENT RENT IN  
MANY CASES.

IF THE PROPERTY DOES GO VACANT,  
I FIRST PUT MONEY BACK INTO THE  
PROPERTY TO TURN IT OVER AND  
MAKE IT PRESENTABLE FOR A NEW  
TENANT.

I HAVE A BROKER WHO WORKS IN MY  
OFFICE FULL TIME WHOSE ONLY  
RESPONSIBILITY IS TO LEASE  
SPACE.

I PAY MONTHLY MEMBERSHIPS TO  
LEASING WEBSITES.

I DISTRIBUTE ALL OUR LISTINGS TO  
A TWICE-MONTHLY BASIS TO  
COOPERATING BROKERS AND EVEN NOW  
I'M OFFERING COOPERATING BROKERS -- IN SO MANY WORDS I'M  
DOING EVERYTHING IN NOW POWER TO  
TRY TO AND GET SPACE LEASED.

WE'RE ALSO NOT LOOKING FOR LARGE  
INCREASES IN RENT FROM ONE  
TENANT TO THE NEXT.

IN MANY CASES WE'RE RELISTING  
SPACE FOR WHAT THE PREVIOUS  
TENANT WAS PAYING AND HAD SOME  
CASES LESS THAN WHAT THE  
PREVIOUS TENANTS WERE PAYING.  
THE RETAIL LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING  
SIMPLY PUT.

BRICK AND MORTAR RETAIL IS  
DECIDING WHAT IT WANTS TO LOOK  
KNICK IN THE -- IN THE NEXT 10  
OR 15 YEARS.

THE CITY'S VERY DISJOINTED AND  
BURDENSOME ZONING PROCESS AND  
POTENTIAL TENANT ARE GOING TO  
SIT ON THE SIDELINES LONGER THAN  
THEY NORMALLY WOULD WHEN  
DECIDING.

AND WHEN THEY WANT TO EXPAND.  
A TAX ON LANDLORDS FOR RETAIL  
VACANCY AT FAME WHEN MOST OF US  
ARE WORKING HARDER THAN EVER TO  
GET SPACE LEASED FEELS LIKE IT'S  
ADDING INSULT TO INJURY.

BOSTON LANDLORDS HAVE ALREADY  
SUFFERED A HUGE FINANCIAL HIT AT  
THE HANDS OF THE CITY AT THE  
2015 SPOT TAX ASSESSMENT ON  
COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TAX WHICH

RESULTED IN SOME CASES A 40% TAX INCREASE ON OUR BUILDINGS. TAX ON VACANCY WON'T HELP TO GET SPACE LEASED ANY FASTER. IT WILL JUST FRUSTRATE LANDLORDS AND ULTIMATELY DRIVE DOWN PROPERTY VALUES.

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS IS AN APPROPRIATE MEASURE FOR THE BACK BAY, NOT SAYING IT'S NOT APPROPRIATE FOR SOME OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS, BUT IN THE BACK BAY, IT FEELS A LITTLE PUNITIVE. THANK YOU.

>> THANK YOU, SIR.

HELLO.

MY NAME IS ERIC.

I'M A RESIDENT OF JAMAICA PLAIN. DON'T HAVE A DIRECT INTEREST IN ANY OF THE VACANT PROPERTIES IN OUR AREA, BUT, OBVIOUSLY, AS A RESIDENT, I HAVE A LOT OF THE CONCERNS.

MY PREDECESSORS BROUGHT UP THE VACANCY OF -- OR POTENTIAL VACANCY I SHOULD SAY OF THE 128 ARTIST ESTABLISHMENT IN JAMAICA PLAIN.

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PLANS GOING FORWARD FOR IT ARE, BUT I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY WILL USE ITS VACANCY AS A METHOD TO TRY TO CONVINCING THE NEIGHBORS OR THE CITY TO CHANGE THE ZONING PLANS FOR THAT PROPERTY.

WE SORT OF CAREFULLY CONSIDERED EXACTLY HOW WE COULD DESIGN THE ZONE FOR THAT PROPERTY SO THAT IT WAS LIKELY TO STAY ARTIST -- ARTIST -- FOR ARTISTS TO USE. AND UNFORTUNATELY, THAT DID NOT SUCCEED.

SO I WANT -- I DO WANT TO MAKE SURE WHATEVER POLICY IS DESIGNED IS DESIGNED CAREFULLY -- DESIGNED CAREFULLY SO AS TO MAKE SURE TO TARGET THAT PARTICULAR FORM OF VACANCY.

I SYMPATHIZE WITH THE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS HERE SAYING THAT IN FACT IT IS QUITE DIFFICULT TO RENT OUT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY.

WE OFTEN AS NEIGHBORS REQUEST THAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THERE ISN'T NECESSARILY A VIBRANT COMMERCIAL SCENE IN THE AREA THAT THE PROPERTY IS BEING BUILT BUT IN THE HOPE THAT ONE DAY THERE MIGHT BE.

AND I THINK WE NEED TO BE SENSITIVE TO THAT WHEN DESIGNING A VACANCY TAX.

THERE PROPERTIES WE'VE ASKED TO BE BUILT THAT THERE IS NO VIABLE WAY TO OCCUPY THEM TODAY.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I THINK WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE FACT THAT A LOT OF THE -- AS SOME OF MY PREDECESSORS HERE HAVE STATED, AT LOT OF -- THERE ARE RETAIL RENT -- RETAIL TENANTS THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED BECAUSE RETAIL BUSINESS IS SUFFERING FROM THE COMPETITION FROM THE INTERNET, FROM AMAZON.

AND THAT'S NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE ANYTIME SOON, BUT I THINK IT MEANS THAT A LOT OF THE THINGS THAT ARE LIKELY TO USE A RETAIL SPACE ARE THE KIND OF BUSINESSES THAT CAN REALLY ONLY FUNCTION LOCALLY, LIKE RESTAURANTS AND, UNFORTUNATELY, FOR SOME PEOPLE, I SUPPOSE, NAIL SALONS.

AND I THINK AS A CITY, THAT PUTS THE BURDEN ON US TO TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT ARE WAYS THAT WE CAN MAKE THE BARRIER TO ENTRY FOR SOME OF THOSE BUSINESSES A LITTLE LOWER.

IT'S EXTREMELY HARD TO START A RESTAURANT IN BOSTON.

IF YOU WANT TO SERVE ALCOHOL, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

I CERTAINLY PERSONALLY KNOW OF A FEW PEOPLE WHO ARE OWNERS OF RESTAURANTS WHO HAVE BOUGHT PROPERTY AND SAT ON IT FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS WHILE THEY SIMPLY WAIT FOR THEIR LICENSING TO GO THROUGH.

AND THAT'S JUST A COMPLETELY NORMAL PART OF OPENING A RESTAURANT IN BOSTON.

IF YOU'RE NEXT TO ONE OF THOSE PROPERTIES, YOU PROBABLY THINK OF IT AS BEING BLIGHTED.

I THINK RESTAURANTS ARE ONLY THE TIP OF ICEBERG.

THERE'S A GROCERY STORE IN JAMAICA PLAIN RIGHT NOW THAT WAS SEEKING TO GET -- I THINK IT WAS A TAKEOUT LICENSE AND BECAUSE ONE RESIDENT A COUPLE OF HOUSES AWAY DIDN'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THEIR AIR CONDITIONER OR THEIR FREEZER UNIT, THEY ARE ON HOLD FOR THAT FOR A YEAR.

THAT PROBABLY IS ALREADY OPEN, BUT DEFINITELY THERE ARE MANY OTHERS THAT SUFFER THROUGH THIS ENTIRE PROCESS FOR YEARS AND SOME OF THEM MAY NEVER OPEN BECAUSE THEY DON'T MANAGE TO GET -- THEY DON'T HAVE THE CASH CUSHION TO SIT ON WHILE THEY WAIT AND MAKE SURE THAT EVERY SINGLE NEIGHBOR NEARBY IS PLEASED.

I DOE THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT NEIGHBORS' INTERESTS BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, BUT I THINK WE HAVE TO BALANCE THAT AGAINST THE FACT THAT, IF IT TAKES TWO OR THREE YEARS TO OPEN EVEN THE MOST BASIC KIND OF BUSINESS, THAT JUST MEANS THAT A LOT OF LOWER CASH BUSINESSES, LOWER PROFIT MARGIN BUSINESSES ARE JUST NEVER GOING TO BE ABLE TO EXIST IN THE CITY.

AND A LOT OF THESE SMALL THOUSANDS-SQUARE-FOOT PROPERTIES ARE PERFECT FOR THOSE KINDS OF BUSINESSES.

SO IF WE MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO START ONE, AND IN A SINKING RETAIL MARKET, THAT IS A RECIPE FOR VACANCY.

>> THANK YOU VERY MUCH.  
FOR YOUR TESTIMONY.

WE CREATED A START-UP CALLED SPACES BECAUSE WE WERE TRAUS FREIGHTED BY THE NUMBER OF VACANCIES WE EXPERIENCED'S AS WE WALKED DOWN THE STREET IN MAJOR COMMERCIAL AREAS.

>> SO OUR COMPANY SPACES TRANSFORMED VACANT STORE FRONTS

INTO COLLECTIVE AND  
COLLABORATIVE ARTIST STUDIOS.  
BY DOING SO WE GIVE ARTIVES  
SPACE TO WORK IN IN THE ART OF  
THE CITY.

WE RETURN LOCAL CREATIVITY TO  
NEIGHBORHOODS AND WE OFFER  
LANDLORDS A SOLUTION TO BRIDGE  
BETWEEN TENANTS.

>> OUR HOPE IS TO USE THE  
EXISTING AND UNDERUTILIZED  
ASSETS IN THE CITY AS TOP ONES  
FOR ARTISTS TO MAKE.

SIRTHLY PUT, WE WANT TO SUPPORT  
LOCAL ARTISTS BY GIVING THEM  
SPACE TO MAKE WORK.

WE DO THIS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN  
OUR CORE THAT WHEN ARTISTS HAVE  
SPACE IN THE CITY, EVERYONE  
BENEFITS.

>> IT BRINGS DIVERSE GROUPS OF  
PEOPLE TOGETHER AND THEY MAKE  
SPACE.

WE THINK THESE ARE INTEGRAL TO  
PRESERVING A CITY'S LOCAL  
CHARACTER AND WE'RE EXCITED  
ABOUT WAYS OUR STORES CAN BE  
SPACES FOR PEOPLE COULD TO COME  
TOGETHER AROUND ART.

WE JUST COMPLETED A SUCCESSFUL  
FIRST PILOT AT FANEUIL HALL  
MARKETPLACE DOWN THE ROAD WHICH  
BROUGHT TOGETHER A DIVERSE GROUP  
OF PEOPLE, MANY OF WHOM WERE  
LOCALS WHO HADN'T VISITED  
FANEUIL HALL IN YEARS.

>> AND WE WOULD LOVE TO WORK  
WITH THE CITY TO SOLVE THIS  
PROBLEM AND WOULD BE EXCITED FOR  
MANY STORE FRORNT TO BE TURNED  
INTO THESE STOREFRONT ARTIST  
STUDIOS AS WELL AS FOR  
COMMUNITIES TOGETHER.

ALSO WE ARE WORKING WITH TWO  
DEPARTMENTS OF THE MAYOR'S  
OFFICE AND THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF  
ARTS AND CULTURE.

WHILE WE HAVE THAT SPECIFIC  
DESIRE, WE HAVE TWO GENERAL APPS  
WE THINK COULD HELP THIS ISSUE.  
THE FIRST IS A FORM FOR PEOPLE  
TO FLAG VACANCIES.

IN OUR EXPERIENCE EVERYONE HAS  
AT LEAST ONE EMPTY STOREFRONT

THAT DRIVES THEM CRAZY IN THE  
MAYBEHOOD.

PUTTING ALL OF THIS ON A MAP  
WOULD HELP CROWDSORS THE  
DATABASE OF THE MOST PERSISTENT  
VACANCIES AND THEY COULD BE  
COLLECTED USING THE C CLICK 6  
INTERFACE.

>> WITH THAT, AS WE TRY TO FIND  
WHAT IS VACANT IS THAT THERE ARE  
SO MANY TECHNICALITIES OF WHAT  
VACANCY MEANS AND THAT COMPARED  
TO JUST THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF  
WALKING DOWN THE STREET IS  
TOTALLY DIFFERENT.

>> BEYOND THAT, WE ARE  
INTERESTED AND EXCITE FOR A  
REGISTRY TO EXIST OF VACANCIES.  
WE ARE -- WE SAW THE EXAMPLE IN  
ARLINGTON AND WE THOUGHT THAT  
WAS GREAT THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO  
REDUCE VACANCIES VERY  
SUCCESSFULLY AND I THINK THAT  
ONE THING WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT  
PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE CITY OF  
BOSTON IS WAYS THAT WE COULD  
ACTUALLY MATCH THE PROBLEMS OF  
VACANT STOREFRONTS WITH THE  
STRAIN THAT A LOT OF THE ARTIVES  
ARE EXPERIENCING AS THEY'RE  
BEING PUSHED TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF  
CITIES AND BEYOND.  
WE THINK THERE'S A WAY TO BRING  
THESE PROBLEMS TOGETHER AND  
ACTIVELY WORK TOWARDS FINDING A  
STRAIGHTFORWARD SOLUTION TO THE  
BOSTON CREATES PLAN CREATED BY  
MAYOR WALSH.  
>> THANK YOU.