

329 Rhode Island Ave NE

A review of the vacant building that has negatively impacted the Eckington Community for decades as a boarded up, blighted property.

12APR10

Presentation to Eckington Civic Association
on the status of 329 Rhode Island Ave NE

What criteria is needed to certify a building as “blighted?”


Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs: Vacant Property - Windows Internet Explorer

http://dcra.dc.gov/dcra/cwp/view,a,3,q,625194,dcraNav_GID,1691,dcraNav,%7C33420%7C.asp

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Vacant Property in the News: Mayor Fenty, DCRA Director Argo Announce New Security Measures for Vacant Properties

Vacant Property

The DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) has exclusive authority to classify vacant buildings as granted through the "Real Property Tax Reform Classification Emergency Amendment Act of 2009." DCRA regularly monitors the District's more than 180,000 properties and investigates complaints from residents and referrals from other agencies and organizations.

The DCRA Vacant Property Unit conducts an initial four point survey/inspection to determine whether or not the property (1) appeared vacant, (2) had excessive vegetation and (3) graffiti and (4) was open and accessible. If the survey/inspections provides convincing evidence that the property is vacant, a letter is sent the owner of record.

Property owners have the opportunity to provide evidence that the home is either "occupied" or is vacant and qualifies for an exemption the vacant property tax rate. Properties must be determined to be "blighted" by DCRA to be classified at the Class 3 tax rate.

The following may be considered in determining whether a property is blighted:

- Failure to comply with the following vacant building maintenance standards
- Doors, windows, areaways, and other openings are weather-tight and secured against entry by birds, vermin, and trespassers, and missing or broken doors, windows, and other openings are covered
- The exterior walls are free of holes, breaks, graffiti, and loose or rotting materials, and exposed metal and wood surfaces are protected from the elements and against decay or rust by periodic application of weather-coating materials, such as paint
- All balconies, porches, canopies, marquees, signs, metal awnings, stairways, accessory and appurtenant structures, and similar features are safe and sound, and exposed metal and wood surfaces are protected from the elements by application of weather-coating materials, such as paint, or
- The structure is boarded up.

It is the responsibility of the property owner to register their property as vacant within 30 days of being unoccupied. Unoccupied means no one is currently living in the home and has no intention of returning.

If you believe a property is vacant is would like to report it to the Office of Vacant Property, please call 311.

Please review the following information regarding the DCRA Vacant Property Initiative. Customers are encouraged to call (202) 442-4332 for an update on the property's status or email vacantproperty@dc.gov.

Vacant Property Information

A list of properties DCRA has determined to be vacant is posted below. If you feel your property is listed in error, please contact DCRA's Vacant Property Unit at (202) 442-4332 immediately

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Does 329 Rhode Island Ave NE exhibit the criteria to be certified “blighted?”

Yes, there is graffiti...



Yes, there are boarded up and unsecured windows and entries...



Yes, the metal of the canopies is exposed...



Yes, metal surfaces are not protected from the elements...



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Does 329 Rhode Island Ave NE exhibit the criteria to be certified “blighted?”

Yes, there are broken windows...



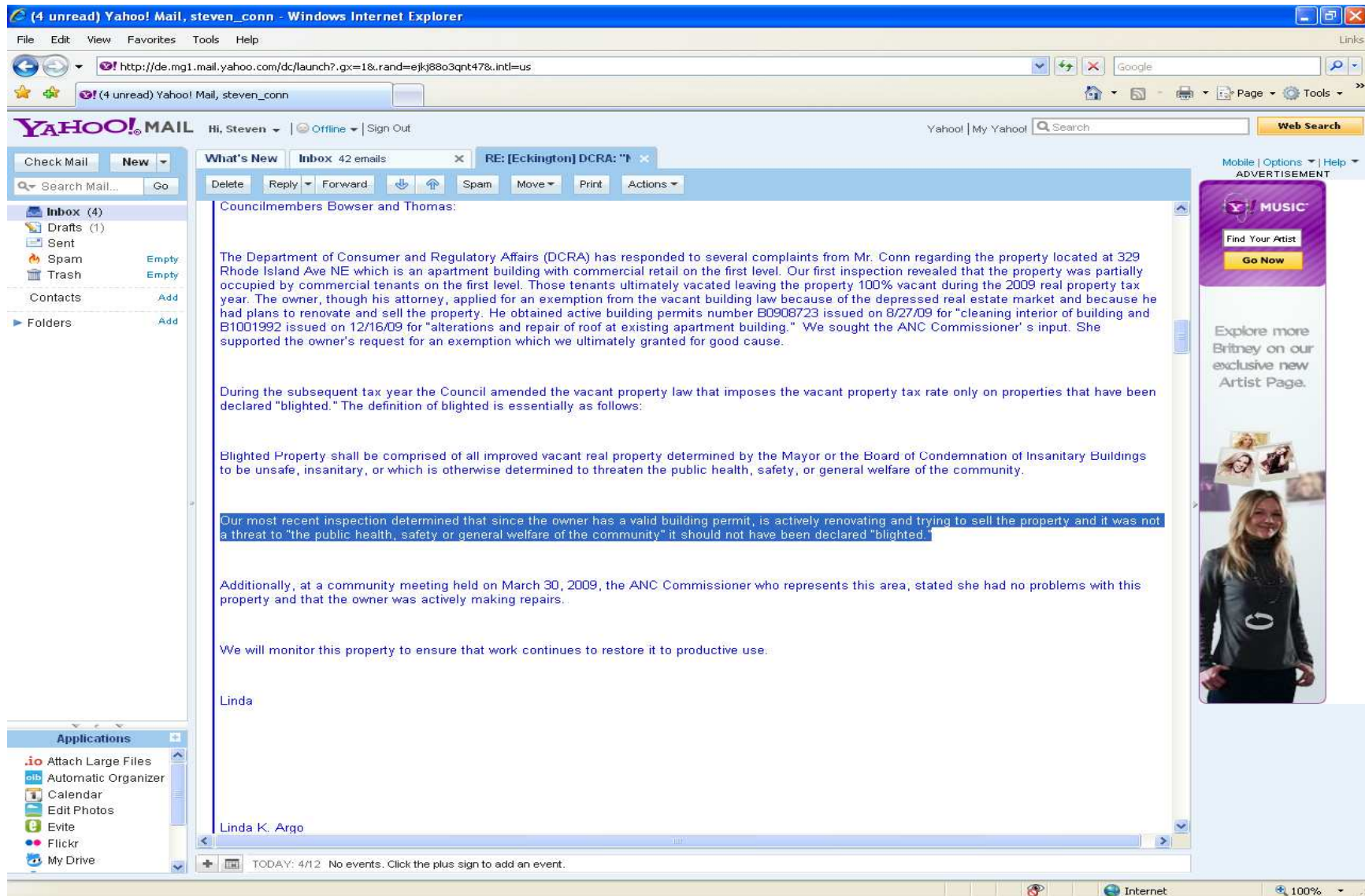
The building is a complete mess...



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However, DCRA Director Linda Argo found no violations



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DCRA Director Linda Argo ruled the building doesn't impact the community...

Really? What about 3 arrests all in 1 day and all within a 1 block radius?

ARREST# : 051001621

DT-TM: 03-APR-10 - 1015

LOCATION: **500 BLK OF RHODE ISLAND AVE NE - PSA: 501**

OFFENDER: BUTLER, L

SEX: M

ARREST# : 051001622

DT-TM: 03-APR-10 - 1120

LOCATION: **400 BLK OF W ST NE - PSA: 501**

OFFENDER: HODGE, D

SEX: M

ARREST# : 051001634

DT-TM: 03-APR-10 - 1730

LOCATION: **2200 BLK OF 4TH ST NE - PSA: 501**

OFFENDER: SMITH, M

SEX: M

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DCRA Director Linda Argo ruled the building doesn't impact the general welfare of the community?

Really? What about all of the loiterers who congregate daily on the 300 block of W Street NE? If the building were occupied, residents wouldn't tolerate the drug deals, loud music and shennanigans that a vacant, boarded up building allows...



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What neighbors are *saying*:

• *J.E. on Friday 09APR wrote:*

"Well done, Steven. It's hard for DCRA to argue against the evidence you've presented in this email. That property is an unambiguous example of the type of property that should have the vacant and blighted tax rate levied on it.

• *K.M. on Saturday 03APR wrote:*

I am fairly new to the blog and I have been following your plight with DCRA and 329 Rhode Island Avenue for weeks now and **I wanted to personally thank you. I lived across the street from the building for about 2 years and moved to 4th and T Streets, NE a couple of years ago and have continued to be disgusted by the lack of upkeep, care, and concern that the owner has given to the building and our community.**

• *J.C. on Friday 02APR wrote:*

Steve, you've got guts and heart, **I applaud your efforts on trying to improve our community,** when others only want to stifle your progress.

• *G.H on Friday 02APR wrote:*

I'm curious about the line (in Reuben Pemberton's response) that says the owner "may" be fined if there are violations that are not abated. **Shouldn't it say he "will" be fined? I mean, I know that's semantics, but either you're in violation or you're not, and if you are, you should get the book thrown at you, agreed?**

• *S.J. on Wednesday, 31MAR wrote:*

I wish my mom could do that but she's past the age (88) and the energy level to participate. **She used to walk to the Safeway from Todd Place just two years ago, but since the uprise in crime, she has ceased doing that.** I work late and cannot attend your meeting. Maybe there is another way to support you and your efforts? **What a shame. I grew up on Todd and feel bad for your daily fight.**

Everything shows that 329 Rhode Island Ave NE should be certified as
“blighted” but...

DCRA has shown unfailing dedication in fighting
the community and instead protecting and
defending the negligent building owner... Why?

329 Rhode Island Ave NE must be certified
“blighted” so our community may move forward.