



**MEDIA ADVISORY  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ANNAPOLIS MAYOR AND COUNCILWOMAN RODVIEN COMMIT  
TO THE COALITION FOR ATONEMENT & REPAIR (CAR)  
FOR AN APOLOGY WITH ACTION FOR  
THE HARMS OF URBAN RENEWAL**

*After Decades of Displacement, Alienation, and Harm, Former Residents, Business Owners, and Descendants of the Old Fourth Ward Finally Had Their Voices Heard at the City of Annapolis Council Meeting*

Annapolis, MD -- September 10, 2024 -- The Coalition for Atonement & Repair (CAR), a grassroots movement advocating for tangible repair for discriminatory governmental actions, called for an Apology from the City of Annapolis for its role in Urban Renewal (also known as "Urban Removal") in the Old Fourth Ward at the City Council meeting on September 9, 2024.

Over 85 members of CAR were present at the meeting. Many of the Old Fourth Ward diaspora — former residents, business owners, and their descendants and supportive community advocates delivered testimonies. Each included their personal experiences of harm and the enduring impacts on their lives, families, and communities from Urban Renewal.

"It displaced families, destroyed our economic base, and wiped out generational wealth. Shortly after we moved to public housing in Robinwood, my grandmother passed away. The stress and displacement were devastating for our family," Argo Duenas, a former resident of the Old Fourth Ward and CAR leader, described the impact Urban Renewal had on her family.

In the City of Annapolis, Maryland's Capital, Old Fourth Ward families and businesses were harmed by the local, state, and federal complicity in Urban Renewal (also known as "Urban Removal") in the

1960s and the 1970s resulting in lost housing, property, and businesses; lost generational wealth; lost political influence; family separation and displacement; broken communities; and, psychological trauma and health issues. Many homeowners and businesses were not reimbursed fairly for their properties and over 50% were displaced into public housing in the city's outskirts, far from their jobs and necessities.

In 2021, the Annapolis City Council passed an ordinance that repealed a city code to eliminate all provisions related to Urban Renewal while recognizing some of the previously stated harms caused to the residents and businesses of the Old Fourth Ward. The sponsor, Alderwoman Elly Tierney, stated that it was the “first step in atonement” by the City and a formal apology should come in a separate resolution. That apology never happened.

Amidst the testimonials of the Old Fourth Ward former residents and descendants, several other residents reported on the issues of mold, rodent infestation, and deterioration of their Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis (HACA) public housing units. These enduring impacts of Urban Renewal continue in Annapolis as exemplified by substandard housing, unsafe communities, and persistent inequities faced by the descendants of the Negro Freedmen, now known as African Americans. Obvious disparities continue in housing, education, employment, wealth, and health.

“The City must take immediate action to restore what was lost and to support the community in rebuilding its future by taking concrete steps towards Acknowledgment, Redress, and Closure. This includes a formal apology, financial atonement, and ensuring that the voices of the Old Fourth Ward Displaced Member Group are central in planning and decision-making processes,” stated Ahsun Powell, CAR’s facilitator and strategist.

The meeting concluded with County Councilwoman Lisa Rodvien unexpectedly speaking and challenging the City Council to join her with the County and State, all complicit in the Urban Renewal, to apologize and also, to provide tangible repair to the Old Fourth Ward former residents and their descendants.

“This is not a burden the city should be bearing alone. The County played a role too. And the state played a role too. I know what the county budget looks like. I know what the city budget looks like. I've been looking at them for six years. The County owes it to the people that were harmed to be involved in the solution.”

“I apologize. I am sure all the City Council....we all apologize for the Urban Renewal. We are all disgusted and this Council [is] going to work with the County and .....the State to see what we can do,” concluded Mayor Gavin Buckley, “We know this (the Old Fourth Ward) is an amazing community.”

## ABOUT THE COALITION FOR ATONEMENT & REPAIR (CAR)

The Coalition for Atonement & Repair's mission is to seek tangible repair for individuals, families, businesses, and communities impacted by discriminatory governmental actions through advocating for rehabilitation, restitution, compensation, satisfaction, and guarantee of non-repetition.

CAR is an Annapolis-based movement that includes, but is not limited to, former residents of the Old Fourth Ward, their descendants, current residents, former business owners, and community advocates seeking atonement and repair for harms caused by governmental action under the "Color of Law."

The group has met regularly over the past year and conducted several listening sessions and surveys. CAR's focus has been to record stories of residents most harmed by the City of Annapolis' Urban Renewal program, collect data, and develop a collective plan for repair.

CAR is partnering with the [Capitol Accountability Project \(CAP\)](#) for strategic support and facilitation in their organizing efforts. This partnership ensures CAR is part of the national movement advocating for community-based transformative policies.

**Website:** [Coalition for Atonement & Repair \(CAR\)](#)

**Photos:** [CAR at September 9 City Council meeting](#) Photo Credit: Emma Buchman

**TESTIMONIES by Members/Supporters of the Coalition for Atonement & Repair and Responses by Elected Officials from [City of Annapolis Council Meeting Video](#)**

- 40:33 Peggy Randall, member of St. Philips Church
- 46:49 Ahsun Powell, CAR core team, facilitator and strategist
- 1:00:36 Argo Duenas, Old Fourth Ward former resident and CAR core team, Annapolis Ward 7
- 1:04:56 Eliza Mae Robinson, Old Fourth Ward descendant, community activist, Annapolis Ward 6
- 1:08:04 Renetra Anderson, New Fourth Ward resident and community advocate, Annapolis Ward 2
- 1:10:25 Dana Baylor, Old Fourth Ward former resident
- 1:26:18 Michael Brown, Old Fourth Ward former resident
- 1:31:54 Cynthia Carter, Old Fourth Ward former resident, CAR core team, and former City of Annapolis alderwoman
- 1:35:35 Linda Mundy, CAR core team, Annapolis Ward 5
- 1:39:35 Raynard Baylor, Old Fourth Ward former resident
- 1:45:57 Bruce Baylor, Old Fourth Ward former resident
- 1:48:34 Crawford McPherson, Old Fourth Ward former resident, Annapolis Ward 4
- 1:51:40 Scotti Preston, Old Fourth Ward former resident
- 1:57:59 Bernadette Pulley Pruitt, Old Fourth Ward former resident, Annapolis Ward 5
- 2:02:07 Lynda Davis, CAR core team
- 2:04:37 Elder Charles James, Old Fourth Ward former resident and CAR core team
- 2:09:18 Godfrey Phelps, Housing advocate
- 2:12:57 Terrell Freeman El, CAR supporter
- 2:15:54 Mike Hinton, Old Fourth Ward former resident
- 2:21:40 Vickie Gipson, Annapolis Ward 3
- 2:23:06 Hazel Snowden, CAR supporter
- 2:23:31 Anne Arundel County Councilwoman Lisa Rodvien
- 2:29:28 City of Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley

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