



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**

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**Agenda Item Number:** 39

**Agenda Date:** September 21, 2023

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Office of Historic Preservation

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Shanon Shea Miller

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

This Ordinance authorizes amending Chapter 12 of the City Code to expand the boundaries of the Vacant Building Program to require property owners of vacant structures within 1,000 feet of a public or private school or state licensed childcare facility to register with the City and establish penalties for violations within the expansion area.

**SUMMARY:**

This ordinance will authorize the amendment Chapter 12 of the City Code by expanding the Vacant Building Program area from 128 square miles to 178 square miles. This proposal is in response to a City Council Consideration Request submitted in 2022 by Councilwoman Adriana Rocha-Garcia and Councilman John Courage to develop a phased approach to expand the City's Vacant Building Program. The Governance Committee considered the item in October 2022 and referred it to the Planning and Community Development Committee (PCDC). In March 2023 PCDC approved the staff recommendation for the first phase of expansion.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Vacant Building Program was created in 2014 with the goal to address the root causes of building vacancy, increase public safety, and encourage economic development by spurring owners of vacant buildings to bring their dilapidated structures back into productive use. Initially, the program applied to the Central Business District, historic districts and landmarks, and a half-mile buffer around active military bases. After the successful pilot program, the City Council made the program permanent and expanded the program area effective in January 2017. Since the start of the program, over 1220 cases are no longer subject to the ordinance because they are either no longer vacant or they are single family structures that meet the standard of care. This City's Office

of Historic Preservation (“OHP”) also provides property owner resources and assistance to educate owners and tackle challenges to redevelopment. The Vacant Building Team hosts owner resource events to increase access to City staff, provide assistance with registration, and build awareness of potential programs and resources.

In the current inventory of 821 active cases, 64% of the properties are single family that do not meet the standard of care required by the ordinance. The remaining 36% are commercial properties. The current program area includes the following areas:

- Historic Landmarks
- Historic Districts + ½ mile buffer
- Central Business District + ½ mile buffer
- Active military bases, Port San Antonio & Brooks + ½ mile buffer
- Neighborhood Conservation Districts + ½ mile buffer
- City-initiated Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones + ½ mile buffer

The proposed expansion, effective January 1, 2024, will retain the current program area and will add a buffer of 1,000 feet around a public or private elementary school, middle school, or high school, or a state licensed childcare facility. The proposed buffer around schools is employed in other City enforcement codes, such as Buildings Chapter 6 and Solid Waste Chapter 14, focused on public health and safety to prioritize and accelerate enforcement and abatement actions in these areas. The expansion will be covered by existing OHP staff, so there will be no increase to the department budget associated with this item. Staff will conduct outreach to stakeholders in advance of the effective date of January 1, 2024.

#### **ISSUE:**

This ordinance expands the Vacant Building Program area by adding all fully-vacant properties within a 1,000-foot buffer around a public or private elementary school, middle school, or high school, or a state licensed childcare facility.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

City Council could choose not to expand the Vacant Building Registration Program. The current program area would remain in place.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This ordinance authorizes the expansion of the Vacant Building Program area by adding all fully-vacant properties within a 1,000-foot buffer around a public or private elementary school, middle school, or high school, or a state licensed childcare facility. The expansion is anticipated to generate a small increase in program revenues from registration and inspection fees for additional properties located within the newly incorporated program area. Any increased revenue will be deposited into the General Fund.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the proposed expansion to become effective on January 1, 2024, as endorsed by the Planning and Community Development Committee.