



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**  
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**Agenda Item Number:** 3

**Agenda Date:** October 19, 2022

**In Control:** Governance Committee Meeting

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**DEPARTMENT:** Office of Historic Preservation

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Shanon Shea Miller

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Expansion of the Vacant Building Program

**SUMMARY:**

A City Council Consideration Request by Councilwoman Adriana Rocha Garcia and Councilman John Courage to revise the City's Vacant Building Program to include vacant lots and expand the program area to the entire city, in combination with a recommendation from city staff on additional funding for departmental staffing and property owner assistance programs.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The City's Vacant Building Program currently covers 128 square miles of the city. The Vacant Building Program (VBP) 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 in 2017 and expanded the program area. It grew from 35 to 128 square miles and includes both single family and non-single-family structures throughout 116,000 parcels in San Antonio. In the current inventory of active cases, 63% of the properties are single family that do not meet the standard of care required by the ordinance. Of those, 85% of the property owners are from the San Antonio area.

The current program area includes the following:

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

The Development Services Department (DSD) operates citywide to address City code violations on vacant lots called in via 311 or identified proactively by Code Officers. Grass above 12 inches in height, trash, rubbish, debris, or brush and dead trees are all considered violations. If after receiving notice, an owner does not address a violation, the City performs the abatement and charges appropriate fees. DSD does not otherwise maintain an inventory of vacant lots.

The Neighborhood & Housing Services Department manages housing production and rehabilitation programs in the city. Leveraging the Vacant Building Program for affordable housing is included as a strategy in the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP). This strategy recognizes the opportunity that vacant buildings might provide for additional affordable housing units.

#### **ISSUE:**

Structures subject to the Vacant Building Program do not qualify for City programs such as minor repair, major repair, and owner-occupied programs because they do not meet the occupied requirement or are commercial properties. Currently, the program and all associated resources cover a limited area in the City. A phased expansion of the program's area, in combination with a proportional increase in resources to the program, would work toward providing long-term solutions for vacancy benefiting property owners, neighborhoods, businesses, nonprofit developers, and the City of San Antonio.

With direction from the Governance Committee, OHP will work together with DSD and NHSD to prepare recommendations for consideration. Recommendations will include a plan for enhancing the offerings of the current Vacant Building Program and a possible strategy, timeline, and budget for expansion of the program area. Staff will also explore opportunities for additional housing programs that could facilitate and support the rehabilitation and reuse of vacant building stock for affordable housing.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This item is for briefing purposed only.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

If the Governance Committee does not refer this item to the Planning and Community Development Committee for further consideration, the Vacant Building Program would continue unchanged in the existing program areas.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends referral to the Planning and Community Development Committee for further consideration.