



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

COSA - CITY CLERK
2022 JUN 17 PM 03:01:33

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Councilman John Courage, District 9
Councilwoman Adriana Rocha Garcia, District 4
COPIES TO: Erik Walsh, City Manager; Tina Flores, City Clerk; Andrew Segovia, City Attorney; John Peterek, Assistant to the City Manager; Emily McGinn, Assistant to City Council
SUBJECT: Expansion of Vacant Building Registry
DATE: June 6, 2022

Issue Proposed for Consideration

I ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee:

Revision of 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.

Brief Background

Vacant and unmaintained properties negatively impact many businesses and neighborhoods in our community. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Development, vacant properties tend to reduce property values, increase crime, and increase costs for municipal governments. Vacant properties are more likely to be trespassed, which is often accompanied by property damage and/or littering. To combat these issues, the City's Vacant Building Program tracks vacant buildings and assists property owners in remedying underlying issues that cause vacancies or code violations. The program has seen significant success in addressing or mitigating vacancy issues through a holistic, solution-oriented approach to helping property owners.

The Vacant Building Program pilot began in 2015 and expanded to limited areas in 2017. The goal of the program is to mitigate vacancy and spur economic development. Under the program, a vacant building is defined as "all lawful activity having ceased, or reasonably appear to have ceased, for thirty (30) days, unless evidence is provided of attempts to lease or sell". Property owners have 90 days to respond to a written violation for a vacant building. Once enrolled, program navigators will assist property owners in bringing their vacant buildings up to program standards and/or productive use.

During enrollment, property owners submit contact information and trespass affidavits, which provides greater efficiency in addressing illegal or dangerous situations at the properties. Program navigators can help connect owners to assistance and resources to bring their properties into compliance. These resources can be extended with additional funding for grant programs.



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Several other Texas cities, including Borger and Marshall, have revitalization and incentive grants that address many of the issues that plague vacant structures. While the City of San Antonio has programs such as minor repair, major repair, and owner-occupied programs, many of the structures that are registered under the Vacant Building Program do not qualify because they do not meet the occupied requirement or are commercial properties.

City Council unanimously approved the Strategic Housing Implementation Plan (SHIP) in December 2021. The fifth recommendation under the Increase Affordable Housing Production, Rehabilitation, and Preservation (HPRP) strategy is to “Leverage the Vacant Building Program for Affordable Housing” (pg. 42). The third paragraph explicitly calls for an expansion of the program, “This strategy proposes to expand the vacant building program across the City and to partner with agencies, community stakeholders, and other programs that can purchase, redevelop, and sell homes at an affordable rate or help current owners rehab their property to provide affordable housing.”

An expansion of the program would also directly assist with other strategies listed in SHIP; CHS6: Implement Community-Centered Principles and Incentives into the Infill Development Process (pg. 28), CIH5: Establish a Land Banking Program to Acquire Land for Future Affordable Housing Projects (pg. 36), and CIH7: Establish a Community Land Trust (pg. 38). This process could be further facilitated by streamlining the Municipal Court processes for vacant residential building violations and drafting enabling legislation that would establish criteria for residential properties to be placed into a land bank or land trust with the consent of the property owners where applicable.

Entities like the San Antonio Housing Trust have been identified as partners who can assist affordable housing activities by establishing a land bank program and community land trusts. A city-wide registry would help those efforts with readily available information on vacant land and buildings. Since there are sometimes issues with clear titles on these types of properties, the SHIP’s PPN6: Expand Land Title Remediation Program (pg. 53) could be further developed with this registry.

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 directly benefit vacant property owners, neighborhoods, businesses, nonprofit developers, and the City of San Antonio.

Submitted for Council consideration by:


Councilman John Courage, District 9


Councilwoman Adriana Rocha Garcia, District 4

John C. ...
[Signature]



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Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures

District

1. Teri Castañeda
2. [Signature]
3. [Signature]

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