



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:16-3105

Agenda Item Number: 2.

Agenda Date: 5/16/2016

In Control: Neighborhoods and Livability Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Historic Preservation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Shanon Miller

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Briefing on the Vacant Building Registration Pilot Program

SUMMARY:

A briefing on the implementation and early success of the 18-month Vacant Building Registration Program. This presentation will focus on identified performance measures, early successes, and recommended program changes identified by staff and an advisory committee comprised of stakeholders and local real estate professionals. A briefing was provided to the full City Council at B Session on April 13, 2016, and staff is now seeking Neighborhood & Livability's endorsement of the proposed program changes before bringing the item to A Session in June.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Program Overview:

The Vacant Building Registration was adopted by Council as an 18-month pilot program in June 2014. The program became effective on January 1, 2015, and it is now in the sixteenth month of implementation. The program requires vacant buildings to register and their exterior and structure to be maintained in good condition. The pilot program area covers the Central Business District, the City's historic districts, all vacant Historic Landmarks, and a half mile buffer around the City's three active military bases.

The Vacant Building Program is currently working to address 330 vacant properties. There are also 63 buildings that are exempt because they have been occupied or are single family homes that have been improved to meet the standard of care in the ordinance. An additional 10 buildings have been sold as a result of the

ordinance and staff is working with the new owners.

When staff confirms that a building has been vacant for thirty or more days, a notice is mailed to the property owner alerting them that they have 90 days to register with the Office of Historic Preservation. That registration must include a plan to rectify violations of the standard of care along with reasonable timelines. Property owners must pay a registration fee of \$250 for a single family home or \$750 for all other building types. They also pay a \$0.01 per square foot inspection fee (minimum \$50). The ordinance includes fee waivers for owners that have already pulled permits and have started to make improvements in order to occupy the building; for situations where a catastrophe such as a fire or flood caused the vacancy; for indigent owners; and if a property owner recently passed away and the property is being probated. Staff may also provide an extension from the registration requirements and associated fees if an owner lists a building for sale or lease at fair market value.

Program Changes:

As recommended by City Council in June 2014, an advisory committee of stakeholders and real estate experts has been created to offer general guidance on the implementation of the Vacant Building Program, to review and recommend potential program changes, to help identify solutions to common title problems, and to identify potential resources. The committee and staff have developed recommended program changes that were shared at the recent B Session (see attachment: Program Recommendations).

At City Council B Session on April 13, 2016, several members of the Council requested that the program area expand to include the entire city. In June, staff will bring an item to City Council that makes the pilot program permanent, makes changes to the ordinance necessary for implementing the program recommendations, as well as a phased expansion plan. This phased expansion will allow adequate time for hiring and will provide staff time to implement the program expansion in an organized way. An associated staffing recommendation will then be presented during the annual budget development process.

ISSUE:

The City Council adopted the 18-month Vacant Building Registration Pilot Program in FY2014. Staff will present recommended program changes to the Neighborhoods & Livability Committee and will seek the Committee's endorsement of those changes.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is requesting that the Neighborhoods & Livability Committee support making the pilot program a permanent program. Staff is also seeking endorsement of the recommended program changes and the phased expansion plan.