

ORDINANCE NO. 4024

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RIVIERA BEACH, PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 11, BY CREATING ARTICLE VI ENTITLED "REGISTRATION OF FORECLOSED AND MORTGAGED REAL PROPERTY" OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS AND CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Riviera Beach has a vested interest in protecting the City against the decay caused by vacant and abandoned properties: and

WHEREAS, vacant and abandoned properties present a serious threat to the public health and safety of the community; and

WHEREAS, the presence of vacant and abandoned properties can lead to a decline in property value, create attractive nuisances, and lead to general decrease in neighborhood and community aesthetics; and

WHEREAS, the increase in foreclosures has caused many properties to become vacant and abandoned during the lengthy foreclosure process; and

WHEREAS, to assist the City in identifying properties that may become or are vacant and abandoned due to foreclosure, the City seeks to impose registration requirements on such properties located within the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Riviera Beach believes that imposing such a foreclosure registration requirement is necessary to protect the residents of the City from nuisances to the fullest extent permissible under state law and to be in the best interest of the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the City.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RIVIERA BEACH, PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. That Chapter 11, entitled "Nuisances" of the City's Code of Ordinances, is hereby amended by creating Article VI, entitled "Registration of Foreclosed and Mortgaged Real Property" to read as follows:

Sec. 11-201. Purpose.

It is the purpose and intent of this ordinance to establish a process to limit and reduce the deterioration of property located within the City of Riviera Beach, which property is in foreclosure, or where ownership has been transferred to lender or mortgagee by any legal method or where property is deemed vacant or abandoned. It is further intended to establish a registration program as a mechanism to protect neighborhoods from becoming blighted through the lack of inadequate maintenance of abandoned and/or vacated properties subject to a mortgage or properties subject to mortgages that are in default. The registration process will require mortgagees to provide the City with the most up to date accurate data and information for contacting a responsible party to bring the property into compliance with this ordinance.

Sec. 11-202. Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning. Where the context will permit and no definitions are provided herein, the definitions provided in the Florida Building Code or the City of Riviera Beach Code of Ordinances shall apply.

"Abandoned" means any real property that is vacant and/or is under a public notice of default, notice of mortgagee's sale, pending tax assessor's lien sale and/or properties that have been the subject of a foreclosure sale where title is retained by the mortgagee including, any properties transferred under a deed-in-lieu of foreclosure sale, a short sale or any other legal means to the mortgagee.

"Accessible" means a property, structure, or building that is unsecured and/or breached in such a way as to allow access by trespassers, criminals, or other unauthorized persons.

"Default" means that the mortgagee files a foreclosure action or public notice of default on the mortgage. A mortgage shall be considered in default at such time as the mortgagee declares said mortgage to be in default either in writing, by recording a lis pendens, or by its actions, or commences foreclosure proceedings.

"Enforcement officer" means any law enforcement officer, building inspector, building official, fire inspector or code enforcement officer employed by the City Riviera Beach.

"Evidence of vacancy" means any condition that on its own, or combined with other conditions present would lead a reasonable person to believe that the property is vacant. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to:

overgrown and/or dead vegetation; electricity, water or other utilities turned off; stagnant swimming pool; statements by neighbors, passers-by, delivery agents or government agents; accumulation of abandoned personal property; and/or readily accessible residence, structures and buildings on the property.

"Foreclosure" means the judicial process by which a property, placed as security for a mortgage loan, after a judicial process, is to be sold at an auction to satisfy a debt upon which the borrower has defaulted.

"Mortgage" means a lien on property conveyed by its owner to a mortgagee as security for an underlying debt or other obligation owed the mortgagee. The term includes all conveyances, conditioned or defensible obligations, bills of sale or other written instruments that convey or sell property for the purpose, or with the intention of, securing the payment of money

"Mortgagee" means the creditor, including, but not limited to, service companies, lenders in a mortgage agreement, and any agent, servant, or employee of the of the mortgagee, or any successor in interest and/or assignee of the mortgagee's rights, interests, or obligations under the mortgage agreement. For the purpose of this article, real estate brokers and agents, solely marketing and/or selling real property on behalf of a mortgagee, shall not be considered an agent, servant, or employee of the mortgagee.

"Nuisance" means any condition, including, but not limited to, an abandoned, unsafe, accessible residence, building, structure, or real property with code violations that constitute a menace to life, property, public health, or the public welfare, or create a fire hazard; any conditions which may be injurious to the health, safety, and welfare of the public; or any conditions that constitute and attractive nuisance or otherwise endanger the public's safety while in the vicinity thereof.

"Owner" means any person, persons, or entity having legal or equitable title, or any real or contingent interests in any real property; being shown to be the property owner in the records of the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser's Office; being identified on the abandoned/vacant real property registration form created pursuant to this article; or being a mortgagee in possession of real property. Any such person, persons, or entity shall have joint and several obligations for compliance with the provisions of this article.

"Property Management Company" means a local property manager, property maintenance company, or similar person or entity responsible for the maintenance and security of abandoned real property.

"Vacant" means any real property, including any building or structure thereon that is not lawfully occupied or inhabited by human beings as evidenced by the conditions set forth in the definition of "evidence of vacancy" above.

Sec. 11-203. Public nuisance.

All abandoned and vacant real property, which is unmaintained or unsecured, is hereby declared to be a public nuisance, the abatement of which pursuant to the police power is hereby declared to be necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Riviera Beach.

Sec. 11-204. Applicability.

This article applies to abandoned or real property, whether occupied or vacant, within the City of Riviera Beach.

Sec. 11-205. Administration and enforcement.

- (a) Failure of the mortgagee to properly register or to modify the registration from time to time to reflect a change of circumstances as required by this article is a violation of this article and shall be subject to enforcement by any of the enforcement means available to the City.
- (b) Pursuant to any judicial finding and determination, including any administrative proceeding that a property is in violation of this article, the City may take the necessary action to ensure compliance and may place a lien on the property for the cost of the work performed, including an administrative fee, to benefit the property and to bring it into compliance.
- (c) Failure of the mortgagee and/or property owner of record to properly inspect and secure a property subject to this article and other requirements of this code, and post and maintain the signage as required in this article, is a violation of this article and shall be subject to enforcement by any means available to the City. Pursuant to a finding and determination, the City may take the necessary action to ensure compliance with this article, and recover costs and expenses in support thereof.

Sec. 11-206. Inspection and registration of real property by mortgagee holding mortgages in default.

- (a) Within fourteen (14) days of the date any mortgagee declares its mortgage to be in default, the mortgagee shall register the real property with the City's Community Development Department, or its designee, or the City's authorized representative. At the time of registration, a local property manager shall be designated to inspect, maintain and secure the real property subject to the mortgage in default. A registration is required for each property.
- (b) Any mortgagee who holds a mortgage on real property located within the City of Riviera Beach shall perform an inspection of the property within five (5)

days of the registration pursuant to subsection (a) above.

- (c) Property inspected pursuant to subsection (b) above that is occupied but remains in default, shall be inspected quarterly by the mortgagee or mortgagee's designee.
- (d) Property which is found to be vacant, or which shows evidence of vacancy shall be inspected at least every thirty (30) days by the mortgagee or mortgagee's designee.
- (e) Registration pursuant to this section shall contain at a minimum the name of the mortgagee, the mailing address of the mortgagee, the e-mail address and telephone number of the mortgagee, the name of the local property manager and said person's address, e-mail address, and telephone number. The local property manager shall be responsible for inspecting, securing and maintaining the property. The property manager named in the registration shall be located within Palm Beach County and available to be contacted by the City, Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., holidays and lunch hours excepted.
- (f) This section shall also apply to properties that have been the subject of a foreclosure sale where title is transferred to the mortgagee as well as any properties transferred to the mortgagee under a deed in lieu of foreclosure.
- (g) Properties subject to this section shall remain under the registration requirement, and the inspection, security, and maintenance standards of this article as long as they remain vacant or subject to having been declared by a mortgagee to be in default.
- (h) Any person or other legal entity that has registered a property under this article must report any change of information contained in the registration within ten (10) day of the change

Sec. 11-207. Annual registration fee.

A nonrefundable annual registration fee in the amount of two hundred Dollars (\$200) per property shall accompany registration. The annual registration fee shall correspond to the fiscal year of the City and the renewal of the registration, along with the payment of the annual fee, shall be completed prior to October 1st of any year. The renewal of the registration with its accompanying fee, shall be the responsibility of the mortgagee and a failure to do so in a timely manner shall subject the mortgagee to code enforcement action pursuant to the City of Riviera Beach Code of Ordinances. The annual registration fee may subsequently be amended from time to time by resolution.

Sec. 11-208. Maintenance requirements.

- (a) Properties subject to this article shall be kept in conformance with all code requirements, including, but not limited to, being kept free of weeds, overgrown brush, dead vegetation, trash, junk, debris, building materials, any accumulation of newspapers, circulars, flyers, notices, except those required by federal, state, or local law, discarded personal items including, but not limited to, furniture, clothing, large and small appliances, printed materials, or any other items that give the appearance that the property is abandoned.
- (b) The properties shall be maintained free of graffiti or similar markings by removal or painting over with an exterior grade paint that matches the color of the exterior structure.
- (c) Front, side, and rear yard landscaping of properties subject to this article shall be maintained in accordance with the City's code, and in accordance with the following standards at all times.
 - (1) Landscaping shall include, but not be limited to, grass, ground cover, bushes, shrubs, hedges or similar plantings, decorative rock or bark or artificial turf/sod designed specifically for installation.
 - (2) Landscaping shall not show evidence of gravel, broken concrete, asphalt or similar material unless xeriscape plan incorporating same have been approved by the city.
 - (3) Landscaping maintenance shall include, but not be limited to, watering irrigation, cutting, and mowing of required landscaped and removal of all trimmings.
- (d) Pools and spas shall be maintained so that the water remains free and clear of pollutants and debris, and free of mosquito breeding or vermin infestation. Pools and spas shall comply with the enclosure requirements of the City's Code and the Florida Building Code, as they may be amended from time to time.
- (e) In the event that the National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center, or other appropriate weather agency declares a hurricane warning for any portion of Riviera Beach, all materials, furnishings, and equipment at the property shall be secured, stored, or removed so as to not create a safety hazard due to hurricane force winds.

Sec. 11-209. Security requirements.

- (a) Properties subject to this article shall be maintained in a secure manner so as to not be accessible to unauthorized persons.

- (b) A "secure manner" shall include, but not be limited to, the closure and locking of windows, doors, gates, and any other openings of such size that may allow a child to access the interior of the property and/or structure. Broken windows shall be secured by replacement, reglazing, or boarding of the windows so as to meet all applicable laws, codes and regulations.
- (c) If the owner of the property is a corporation, partnership, and/or out-of-area mortgagee, a local property management company shall be contracted by the owner to perform monthly inspections to verify compliance and the requirements of this article, and any other applicable laws.
- (d) Properties subject to the provisions of this article shall be posted with the name, address, and 24-hour contact phone number of the local property management company. The posted sign shall be no less than eighteen (18) inches by twenty-four (24) inches, and shall be of a font that is legible from a distance of forty-five (45) feet. The posting shall contain, along with the name, address, and 24-hour contact phone number, the language "THIS PROPERTY IS MANAGED BY" and "TO REPORT PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS" with the applicable contact information. All information thereupon shall be clear, legible, and updated as required.

The posted sign shall be placed on the interior of a window facing the street to the front of the property so it is visible from the street; secured to the exterior of the building/structure facing the street to the front of the property so it is visible from the street; or, if no such area exists, on a stake of sufficient size to support the posting in a location that is visual from the street to the front of the property. Exterior posting shall be constructed of and printed with weather-resistant materials.

- (e) The local property management company shall inspect the property as required herein to ensure that the property is in compliance with this article and shall keep a log of the inspection results. Upon request of the City, the local property management company shall provide a copy of the inspection log to the City.

Sec. 11-210. Responsibility for compliance.

- (a) It is the responsibility of the owner to maintain the owner's property in accordance with the provisions of this article. A mortgagee of any mortgage agreement which exists on abandoned real property that is in violation of this article shall be a responsible party for compliance

with this article upon the filing of a lis pendens and/or action, the purpose of which is to foreclose upon the mortgage or similar instrument that secures debt upon the residential real property. The mortgagee's responsibility for compliance with the provisions of this article shall only be effective during periods of time that the property shall be vacant and in foreclosure. The responsibility of the mortgagee shall remain until such time as the subject property is sold or transferred to a new owner, or the foreclosure action described herein is dismissed.

Sec. 11-211. Additional authority.

- (a) If an appropriate enforcement officer has reason to believe that a property subject to the provisions of this article is posing a serious threat to the public health, safety and welfare, the enforcement officer may bring the violation before the code enforcement special magistrate, or a court of competent jurisdiction as soon as possible to address the conditions of the property.
- (b) If there is a finding that the condition of the property is posing a serious threat to the public health, safety and welfare, then the code enforcement special magistrate or a court of competent jurisdiction may direct the City to abate the violation and charge the mortgagee with the cost of abatement.
- (c) If the mortgagee does not reimburse the City for the cost of abatement within thirty (30) days of the City sending the mortgagee the invoice, then the City may lien the property with the cost of abatement, along with any and all administrative fees allowed by law to recover the administrative personnel services.

Sec. 11-212. Adoption of rules and regulations.

The City Manager, or designee, is authorized and empowered to adopt rules and regulations as may be reasonable necessary and available to carry out the terms of this article.

Sec. 11-213. Provisions supplemental.

Nothing contained in this article shall prohibit the City from enforcing its codes by any other means, including, but not limited to injunction, abatement or as otherwise provided by law or ordinance.

SECTION 2. It is the intention of the City Council and it is hereby ordained that the provisions of this Ordinance shall become and be made a part of the Code of Ordinances

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of the City of Riviera Beach, and the sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered to accomplish such intentions.

SECTION 3. If any word, phrase, clause, subsection or section of this Ordinance is for any reason held invalid, the invalidity thereof shall not affect the validity of any remaining portions of this Ordinance.

SECTION 4. That all sections or parts of sections of the Code of Ordinances, all ordinances or parts of ordinances, and all resolutions or parts of resolutions in conflict herewith, be and the same are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 5. Specific authority is hereby granted to codify this Ordinance.

SECTION 6. That this Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon its passage on second and final reading.

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PASSED AND APPROVED on first reading this 5th day of
JUNE, 2013.

PASSED AND ADOPTED on second and final reading this 17TH day of
JULY, 2013.

APPROVED:



THOMAS A. MASTERS
MAYOR



CEDRICK A. THOMAS
CHAIRPERSON

ATTEST:



CARRIE E. WARD
MASTER MUNICIPAL CLERK
CITY CLERK



DAWN S. PARDO
CHAIR PRO TEM



BRUCE A. GUYTON
COUNCILPERSON



JUDY L. DAVIS
COUNCILPERSON



TERENCE D. DAVIS
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