

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Honorable Members of the City Commission  
Alina T. Hudak, City Manager

**FROM:** Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez

**DATE:** June 22, 2022

**SUBJECT:** **Referral to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee to Discuss the Adoption of a Vacant Storefront Registry Ordinance, along with appropriate Registration Fees and Fines for Non-compliance.**

---

I would like to refer the above-referenced item to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (the “Committee”) to consider the adoption of a Vacant Storefront Registry Ordinance.

Local shops, offices and restaurants that occupy storefronts of busy, commercial streets inject life into the City’s commercial corridors. Without them, these areas do not attract residents or visitors, and vacancies for extended periods of time leave these areas barren, undesirable, and vulnerable to crime.

In order to address vacant storefronts, multiple cities, including San Francisco, California, Washington, DC, and Arlington, Massachusetts, have adopted Vacant Property Registration Ordinances. These ordinances generally require that owners of vacant commercial properties submit information to a City registry and pay an annual fee for each year that the property remains vacant. In doing so, the municipality is able to track and monitor vacant properties, establish a dialogue with property owners to understand the nature of and cause behind the vacancy, and develop strategies to help the owner either tenant the space, temporarily activate it, or else adhere to minimum standards for the appearance and maintenance of the property while vacant.

The City of Cambridge commissioned the attached report, entitled “Storefront Vacancies Best Practices” and as part of the report, conducted case studies on cities that adopted Vacant Storefront Registration Ordinances. The case studies yielded the following key findings:

- The Ordinances almost always resulted in improved communication between property

owners/lending institutions and municipal agencies;

- The timetable wherein a property owner is required to report a vacancy varies, but typically falls between 30 and 90 days, with fees typically being due at the time of registration;
- Fine structures for failing to register vary, but tend to have the capacity to accrue rapidly for persistent and repeat offenders;
- Exemptions and waivers for registration fees are typically discretionary and determined based on the proceedings of a hearing;
- Most Ordinances require that vacant properties adhere to preexisting standards for sanitary, building, and fire codes, and all of the ordinances required that owner contact information be posted in a prominent and visible location.

A copy of the Cambridge Report is attached to this Memorandum.

I would like the Committee to consider the adoption of similar legislation in the City of Miami Beach to address numerous vacant storefronts located in our busiest commercial areas, and I have asked the City Attorney's Office to prepare a draft ordinance for the Committee's consideration.

A Vacant Storefront Registration Ordinance, with the opportunity to waive the fees and/or fines for non-compliance if owners voluntarily elect to participate in City's Vacant Storefront Artist Program or take other similar measures to activate their vacant spaces, could be a powerful tool for the City to improve the quality of its commercial corridors and vibrancy of the City's international brand.

Should you have any questions or concerns about any of the foregoing, please do not hesitate to contact me or my aide.

KRG/RAP/ms