

**Vacant Building Ordinance May Have
Unintended Consequences for the City
By the Small Property Owners of San Francisco Institute (SPOSFI) News**

The Board of Supervisors has passed an ordinance amending the San Francisco Building Code to require the owner of a vacant building to register it with the Department of Building Inspection.

The new ordinance requires the owner to maintain the grounds, the exterior and interior of the building secured and in good condition and to pay an annual registration fee. The initial registration and annual renewal fee is set at the DBI inspection rate of \$170 per hour with a 4.5 hour minimum. With the other miscellaneous fees remaining in effect, owners will have to pay an additional minimum cost of \$765 a year.

Vacant Building Sign Posting Required

The ordinance requires the owner of the vacant or abandoned building to post a sign, no smaller than 8.5 x 11 inches at the front of the building in a conspicuous location, protected from weather that provides the current name, address and phone number of the owner of record or authorized agent. If a notice of default or foreclosure has been recorded for the property, the lender's name, address and telephone number must also be provided.

Why SPOSFI Objects to the Ordinance

SPOSFI supports legislation requiring owners of vacant buildings to keep their building and grounds in good condition. That is clearly the legal and civic duty of every responsible owner – no argument there. However, we have a big problem with the requirement for signage. We met with the legislation's author, Supervisor and Board President David Chiu, to ask that this requirement be stricken; pointing out that such signage constitutes an invitation to squatters and vandals, particularly graffiti vandals and is unnecessary since owner contact information is easily obtained via the public record. Unfortunately, our pleas went unheeded.

Supervisor Sean Elsbernd asked whether the new regulations would also apply to city-owned buildings that are vacant. Supervisor Chiu assured him that city-owned buildings would not be exempt.

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