

Vacant Building & Lot Commercial (VBLC) Program – FAQ

1. What is the VBLC Program?

The Vacant Building & Lot Commercial Program is a City of Fort Bragg initiative designed to keep commercial areas vibrant, safe, and attractive. It requires owners of vacant or abandoned commercial buildings and lots to register with the City, maintain their property to City standards, and take steps to prevent blight, vandalism, and public safety hazards.

2. Why is the City implementing this program?

Vacant properties can hurt Fort Bragg's appearance, reduce foot traffic, discourage business investment, and create public safety issues. The program:

- Encourages timely reuse or activation of vacant spaces.
- Holds owners accountable for upkeep and security.
- Helps the City track and address long-term vacancies.
- Supports business attraction, marketing, and downtown revitalization.

3. Which properties are covered?

The program applies to all properties in Commercial Zones within Fort Bragg that have been vacant for 90 consecutive days or longer.

- Vacant Buildings: Any commercial building with no active tenant or business operation for 90+ days.
- Vacant Lots: Any unoccupied lot in a commercial zone showing signs of neglect.
- Properties must be registered regardless of condition—even if well-maintained.

4. What about mixed-use buildings?

If a building has ground-floor commercial and residential above:

- Only the vacant commercial portion is subject to the program.
- Residential units are not included unless vacant and abandoned under other City regulations.

5. What will I need to do if my property qualifies?

Registered properties must:

- Pay the annual fee (**\$150 for buildings** / **\$100 for lots**).
- Post required signage with:
 - “No Trespassing” notice (per City standards)
 - Local property manager contact information
 - Sign advertising the property for sale/lease or noting ongoing maintenance
- Maintain the exterior and grounds to City standards.
- Secure the property from trespassers (locks, intact windows/doors, possible lighting/security system if required).
- Conduct monthly inspections and submit reports to the City.

6. What is the monthly monitoring fee?

If a property remains vacant after registration and is subject to monthly monitoring, a **\$150/month fee** applies. This covers City staff inspections, enforcement follow-ups, and associated costs.

7. What happens if I don't register my property?

Failure to register is a violation of the Fort Bragg Municipal Code and may result in:

- Administrative citations and fines.
- Mandatory registration plus late fees.
- Liens or special assessments added to your property tax bill.
- Potential legal action to ensure compliance.

8. Are there any fee waivers?

The annual monitoring fee (not registration fee) may be waived if:

- The property has an active building permit with ongoing, diligent construction or repair,
or
- The property is code-compliant and actively marketed for sale, lease, or rent.

9. What is a Temporary Activation and why use it?

Owners can use vacant storefronts for short-term uses such as pop-up retail, art displays, nonprofit activities, or vendor markets while seeking a permanent tenant. This:

- Keeps the area vibrant and inviting.
- Reduces opportunities for vandalism or illegal dumping.
- Acts as a marketing tool for the property.
- Helps entrepreneurs test concepts before committing long-term.

10. Who will manage enforcement?

The Community Development Director or his/her designee will oversee the program, maintain the registry, conduct inspections, and ensure compliance. Finance staff will manage billing, renewals, and special assessments.

11. When does the program start?

If approved by City Council on **August 25, 2025**, the ordinance takes effect **September 24, 2025**.

- **October 2025:** Public outreach and initial inspections.
- **December 2025:** First registration deadline for qualifying properties.