

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION 2024-25

VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS REGISTRY & STRATEGIES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING 11/10

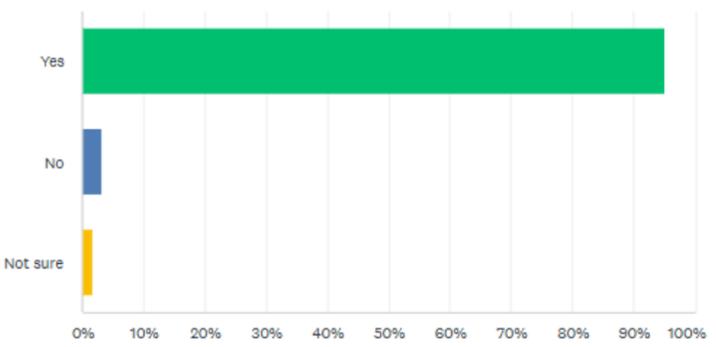


SUMMER SURVEY RESULTS:



Section 1: Community Perception Do you believe vacant storefronts and commercial buildings are a concern in Fort Bragg?

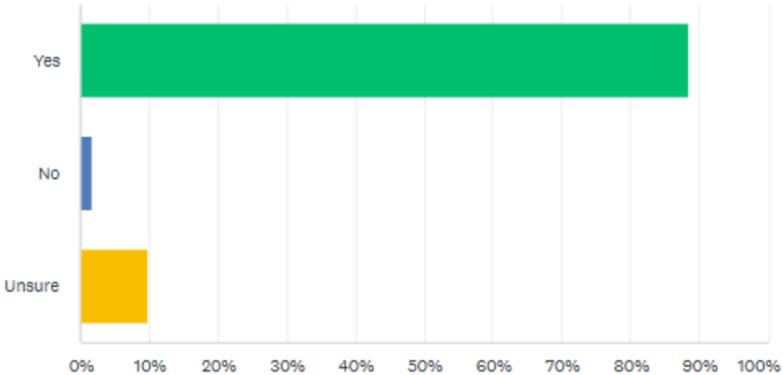
Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.08%	58
No	3.28%	2
Not sure	1.64%	1

Section 2: City Action & Policy Do you think the City should take a more active role in addressing vacant storefronts?

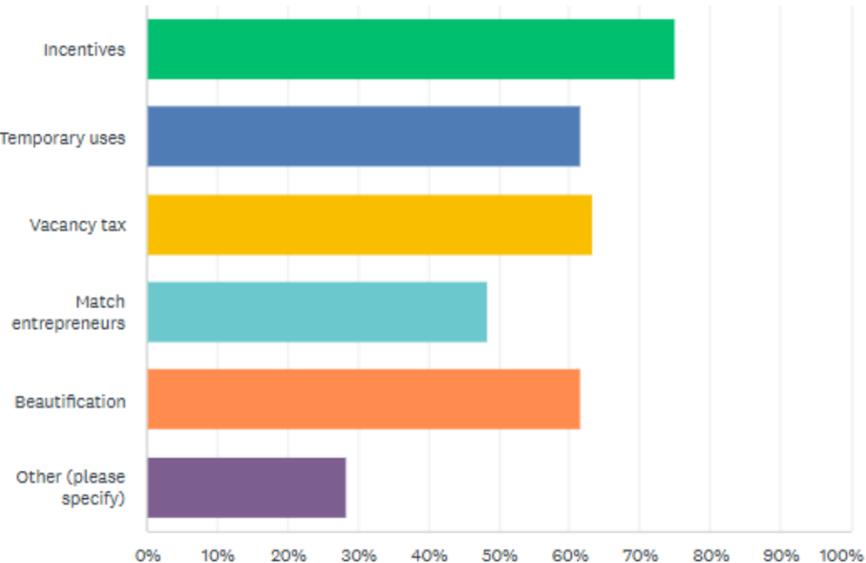
Answered: 61 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	88.52%	54
No	1.64%	1
Unsure	9.84%	6
TOTAL		61

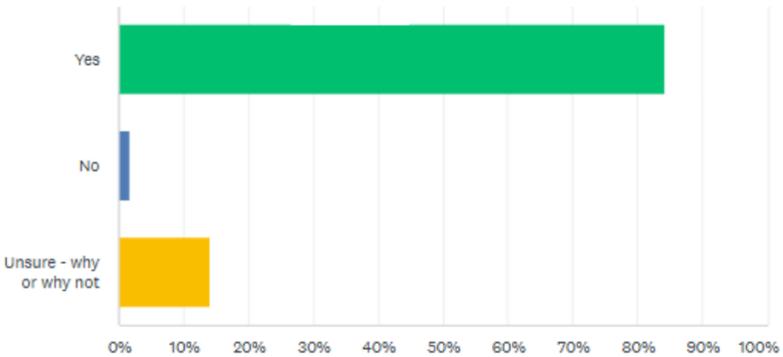
What types of actions would you support the City taking? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 60 Skipped: 1



Do you feel this issue should be a priority for the City Council in the next 12-18 months?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.21%	48
No	1.75%	1

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS

1. COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS REGISTRY

2. STOREFRONT ACTIVATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

3. VACANCY TAX (Long-Term Policy Tool)

4. ENFORCE EXISTING BLIGHT AND AESTHETIC STANDARDS

5. TEMPORARY USE AUTHORIZATION & FLEXIBILITY



1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS

PURPOSE OF THE VBCL

Establish a Vacant Commercial Building & Lot Program to address long-term vacancies, improve maintenance, and strengthen downtown vibrancy.

- Keep commercial areas vibrant, safe, and attractive
 - Address blight, vandalism, and public safety risks
 - Encourage reuse of vacant properties
 - Support business attraction and revitalization
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1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS (CVBL)

APPLICABILITY

- It is within the Commercial Zone in Fort Bragg **AND**
- Vacant or Abandoned for (90 consecutive days) **AND**
- Properties with clear signs of neglect **AND**
(disconnected utilities, overgrown vegetation, graffiti, uncollected mail, junk visible from the storefront, broken windows)
- Vacant lots are also included if they have no active use or exhibit similar signs of neglect.

EXCEPTION FOR IMMEDIATE HAZARD

- Shorter timeframe- not to exceed 10 days of notice

1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS

Vacant & Inactive Commercial Properties – CVBL Program

Vacant Commercial Buildings

\$100 annual registration fee

\$150/month monitoring fee (per building)

Vacant Commercial Lot Fee (not considered at this time)

1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS (CVBL)

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Exterior

- Landscaping maintained, weeds removed, sidewalks clean.
- Trash/debris removed promptly; graffiti abated.
- Structural integrity preserved (paint, roof, gutters, windows, stairs, etc.)

Interior

- Secure from unauthorized entry and weather damage.
- Garbage removed; pests controlled.
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors installed.
- Compliant with all City and building codes.

1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS (CVBL)

SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS

- “No Trespassing” Sign — Must meet City standards and comply with California Penal Code § 602 for enforcement purposes.
- Contact Information — Must list the property owner’s or authorized local agent’s name
- Property Status Signage — Must clearly state the property’s status, such as: • “UNDER MAINTENANCE — NOT AVAILABLE FOR SALE, LEASE, OR RENT,” or • “AVAILABLE — FOR SALE/LEASE/RENT” (if the property is actively being marketed).

Not requiring property owners to advertise availability unless they are actively marketing the property.



1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS (CVBL)

OWNERS OUTSIDE MENDOCINO COUNTY

- Must hire a local agent/service provider for inspections, maintenance, and reporting,
- Contract evidence must be submitted to the City,
- Owner/agent must be available 24/7 and respond within 2 hours to complaints, and
- Owner remains responsible for compliance.

1.COMMERCIAL VACANT BUILDINGS/LOTS (CVBL)

REQUIREMENT

The program emphasizes education, but for properties that remain non-compliant

- Registration with the City
- Annual Registration fees: \$100 (buildings)
Monthly Monitoring fees: \$150 (if applicable)
- Post Visible signage with owner/manager contact information (no trespassing, contact information, status)
- Monthly inspections and reporting
- Secure property from trespassers
- Ongoing Maintenance of Buildings and grounds

How Fort Bragg's Proposed Registry Compared to Other Cities

City	Mandatory Registration?	Vacancy Threshold	Registration Fee	Notes
Willits	Yes	90 days	\$100 first year; \$200 second year; \$1,000 third year; \$2,000 fourth and beyond	Escalating fee structure to discourage prolonged vacancy; enforced through Code Enforcement.
Ukiah	Yes	Broad (abandoned or distressed)	\$150 flat fee for property registration; \$500 annual monitoring	Applies to both commercial and residential properties; includes ongoing inspection, maintenance, and contact posting requirements.
Clearlake	Yes	30 days; registration required within 10 days	Initial: \$100 + \$12.50/month until renewal; Renewal: \$250 + \$200/month monitoring	Requires monthly inspections, signage, and upkeep; part of a broader property maintenance enforcement program.
Fortuna	Yes	60 days	\$150 annual registration	Applies to both residential and commercial properties; includes inspection and maintenance obligations; annual renewal required.
Healdsburg	Yes	90 days	\$250 annual registration	Commercial-only focus; registration includes maintenance standards and code compliance verification; monitored by Planning Department.
Fort Bragg (Proposed)	Yes	90 days	\$100 annual registration + \$150 monthly monitoring (set by resolution)	Applies to vacant and underutilized commercial properties; includes monthly inspections, signage, hardship waivers, and temporary activation provisions.

Enforcement

- The Ordinance authorizes administrative citations and fines, costs recovery and liens under Govt Code 38773.5
- The City has partnered with 4Leaf to assist CDD Staff to administer the program.

HARDSHIP WAIVER

Owners may request relief if:

- Property is in full compliance as of the ordinance's effective date,
 - Waivers for verified hardship (monitoring fees only).
 - Active marketing or construction may qualify for temporary relief.
 - Violations are corrected within the compliance period,
 - No violations for 12 months
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Timeline

Milestone	Target Date	Action
Program Materials Finalized	By January, 2026	Finalize application packets, inspection forms, and program guidelines.
Staff Training	By Dec-January 2026	Train Community Development staff in coordination with 4Leaf on program requirements, forms, and tracking procedures.
Public Outreach Launch	Dec-February 2026	Announce program via press release, City website, social media, and direct mail to commercial property owners.
Initial Compliance Inspections	March 2026	Begin inspections to identify non-compliant properties in commercial zones.
Notices of Violation Issued	As inspections identify non-compliance	Provide a 30-day compliance period to correct violations before the registration requirement applies.
First Mandatory Registrations	March-April 2026	Registration begins for properties not brought into compliance or with recorded Notices of Default.
Ongoing Program Monitoring	June 2026 and ongoing	Monthly reporting and inspections per program requirements.

COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES – VACANT BUILDINGS

1. PRO-ACTIVE CODE ENFORCEMENT FOCUS: CBD
-Enforce Nuisance standards
2. Temporary-Use Flexibility
3. Targeted Incentives:
4. Vacancy Tax – Long-term Policy Tool

2. STOREFRONT ACTIVATION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Examples of Temporary Activation Uses

- **Art installations or student projects** – rotating exhibits in vacant storefronts that showcase local talent, improve street appeal, and deter vandalism.
- **Pop-up events or retail** – short-term leases for seasonal businesses, specialty markets, or product launches.
- **Nonprofit incubators** – temporary space for local nonprofits to provide services or host workshops.
- **Rotating vendor marketplaces** – indoor micro-retail spaces for multiple vendors sharing a location.
- **Community information centers** – providing updates on City projects, local events, and small business resources.
- **Short-term cultural uses** – such as live performances, reading rooms, or art workshops in unused commercial spaces.

3. VACANCY TAX

- Evaluate whether a tax on long-term vacant properties could encourage property activation.
- Ensure vacant commercial properties contribute to the community if left idle.

Potential Features:

- Applicability: Commercial properties vacant beyond 6–12 months.
- Exemptions:
 - Properties under active renovation permits.
 - Properties actively marketed and code-compliant.
 - Non-rentable spaces due to zoning/building restrictions.
- Revenue Use: Dedicated to downtown revitalization, economic development, and public safety.

3. VACANCY TAX

Council Direction

☞ SHOULD STAFF PURSUE FURTHER RESEARCH AND RETURN WITH OPTIONS FOR A VACANCY TAX IN FORT BRAGG?

Next steps:

- Staff study to assess feasibility and structure.
- Review best practices from other California cities (e.g., San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland).
- Return to Committee with recommendations and fiscal impacts.

4. ENFORCE EXISTING BLIGHT AND AESTHETIC STANDARDS

Background

- Fort Bragg already has Municipal Code provisions addressing property maintenance, blight, and aesthetic standards.
- Enforcement has **historically been complaint-driven** and limited by staffing.
- Aligning the Commercial Vacancy Registry Program with existing enforcement tools could strengthen accountability and improve downtown vitality.

Examples of Standards:

- Removal of graffiti, trash, and weeds.
- Boarding/securing broken windows and doors.
- Maintaining landscaping and exterior paint.
- Ensuring signage is not dilapidated or misleading.

4. ENFORCE EXISTING BLIGHT AND AESTHETIC STANDARDS

Council Direction

☞ Should staff increase enforcement of existing blight and aesthetic standards in our CBD by:

1. Integrating enforcement into the Vacancy Registry Program, or

Consistency

This proposed program directly supports multiple adopted City priorities, including:

- 2025–2028 Strategic Plan – Economic Development Goal: Revitalize the Central Business District by reducing vacancies and encouraging active use of commercial spaces.
- City Council Goal – Downtown Vitality: Improve the pedestrian experience, strengthen the business climate, and attract investment by addressing visible vacancies.
- Public Safety and Quality of Life Initiatives: Reduce vandalism, illegal dumping, and nuisance activity in vacant properties, thereby improving neighborhood appearance and safety.

General Plan LU-3, LU-4, CD-1.4, CD-2.2: Maintain downtown vitality.



QUESTIONS?