

VACANT COMMERCIAL BUILDING & STOREFRONT OBLIGATIONS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

Cost and Overview

Pursuant to San Francisco ordinance 52-19, all vacant storefronts in San Francisco must be registered with the Department of Building Inspection. Registration is required within 30 days of a vacancy and once annually if the storefront remains vacant. The registration cost is \$711 per year, and up to 50% of the fee can be refunded if your storefront becomes occupied that year. If there are vacancy complaints and your storefront is not registered the fine is \$2,844. A vacant or abandoned building is defined as being unoccupied with any of the following:

- No current lease or rental agreement
- No security
- Boarding up for security
- Multiple code violations

Maintenance Requirements

Even if the building is registered as vacant, the Department of Building Inspection can still cite you for blight if you do not adequately maintain the property. Each year, a licensed building professional must prepare a compliance report to certify that you are meeting the vacant storefront requirements. The professional could be a contractor, an engineer, architect, or licensed building consultant. Maintenance requirements are that you:

- Secure the property so that only people you authorize are able to access it.
- Prevent damage from rain and plumbing leaks
- Regularly clear garbage and other debris
- Make sure the property does not have pests like mice or insects
- Shut off utilities that are not needed for building maintenance
- Maintain landscaping and other plants and regularly clear trash and debris.
- Clean up graffiti
- Make sure parts of your building are safe and in good condition, including paint and finishes, foundation, roof, chimneys and flues, gutters, downspouts, scuppers, and flashing, windows and skylights, and exterior stairs and decks
- Post a sign for the public. The sign must be at least 8.5 by 11 inches, and be visible by the public. It should also be protected from the weather. Include the name, address, and phone number of the owner of record (or authorized agent). If there is a notice of default or foreclosure recorded for the property, also include the lender's name, address, and phone number.

Submitting Your Application

After a compliance report is prepared, property owners must submit an application, payment, and provide the following information:

- Property owner information
- How you have secured the property against unauthorized entry
- Your future plans for the property
- Name of your fire and liability insurance provider
- Lender information if the property has a notice of default or foreclosure

After you register your building or storefront, the Department of Building Inspection will contact you to schedule an inspection to ensure that all requirements are being met.



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Special Cases: Pending Lease or Sale

You do not need to register if there is a lease or sale pending on the property. You will need to send proof documenting the lease or pending sale, like an MLS number or a copy of the lease.

Removing Your Property from the Vacant or Abandoned Building List

Once the property is no longer vacant, you remove your building from the vacant or abandoned building list. You can request to have it removed from the registry if you:

- Are occupying the property yourself
- Were issued a building permit for the property (for only as long as work is being performed)
- Are listing the building for sale

You must also document that the building is being used if you are now occupying the property. You must provide a copy of all of your most recent:

- PG&E or gas and electric statement
- Recology and Garbage statement
- PUC or water statement
- Current lease or rental agreement indicating property address (if currently a rental) or a copy of the property insurance policy indicating the subject property address and policy expiration referenced on the policy (if owner-occupied),

If you were issued a building permit, you must get a copy of the signed job card. If you are selling the property, you must get proof of the sales listing, including real estate number or MLS number.

Interacting with the Department of Building Inspection and Finding Service Providers

If you have any questions throughout the process, you may contact DBI's Code Enforcement Section at dbi.codeenforcement@sfgov.org or 628-652-3430. For additional information, please visit: <https://sf.gov/register-your-vacant-storefront>. The DBI program webpage contains sample compliance documents and PDF applications with instructions. To find vendors, please visit BOMA San Francisco's online vendor directory, sortable by different service: <https://bomasf.onlinemarketbase.org/>. You may also contact David Harrison, Manager of Government and Public Affairs at davidh@boma.com.

Please note: This information sheet covers registration requirements for vacant commercial buildings and storefronts citywide. There is a separate commercial vacancy tax program which only applies in certain Named Neighborhood Commercial Districts (NCD) or Named Neighborhood Commercial Transit Districts (NCT). For information on that program, please visit the San Francisco Commercial Vacancy Tax Ordinance guide on the BOMA SF Advocacy Resources webpage.