

CITY OF LAUREL

ORDINANCE No. _____

An Ordinance for the Registration and Regulation of Vacant Commercial Properties and Vacant Commercial Lots in the City of Laurel

WHEREAS, in order to protect property values, deter commercial blight, and promote economic development and reinvestment in key commercial areas, the City of Laurel seeks to create a registry of vacant commercial properties and lots by requiring the registration and maintenance of vacant commercial buildings and vacant lots in the Central Business District and the 16th Avenue Corridor in the City of Laurel; and

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED by the Mayor and the City Council that the City of Laurel Code of Ordinances include the following regarding vacant commercial properties and vacant lots:

A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

It is the purpose and intent of the City of Laurel ("city") to establish a process to address the deterioration and blight of commercial business districts caused by abandoned, foreclosed or distressed real property and vacant lots located within the city, and to identify, regulate, and reduce the number of abandoned commercial properties and vacant lots located within the city. It is the city's further intent to establish vacant property registration requirements as a mechanism to protect commercial business districts from becoming blighted due to the lack of adequate maintenance and security of abandoned and foreclosed real property and vacant lots.

B. DEFINITIONS

The following words and terms shall have the meanings set forth in this section, except where otherwise specifically indicated.

Central Business District (CBD): As defined by the City of Laurel's zoning maps.

16th Avenue Corridor: Commercial properties and commercial lots within 1,000 feet of the centerline of MS Hwy 15 from I-59 to the City's northern boundary.

Owner: For the purpose of this article, the definition of "owner" shall be any person or legal entity which owns an interest in the property in question or any legal entity which serves as a managing agent for the property in question. This definition specifically excludes any person who is an employee of the owner who has a title of "manager" or any employee of a managing agent who has the title of "manager."

Vacant: A building is "vacant" when it is unoccupied, lacking any active utilities, deemed uninhabitable, or ceases to be regularly used by the owner or by someone with the permission of the owner. A lot is vacant when there is no structure present.

Property means any real, commercial or industrial property, including buildings or structures situated on the property, located within the City of Laurel Central Business District and the 16th Avenue Corridor.

C. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Owners of vacant commercial buildings and vacant commercial lots within the Central Business District and the 16th Avenue Corridor must register with the Inspection Department of the City of Laurel.
2. Required registration information includes:
 - Owner and property manager contact information
 - Legal description, PPIN, and address
 - Floor plan for emergency/code use
 - Maintenance and rehabilitation plan of action with a timeline
 - Rehabilitation plan of action updated every six months
 - Proof of \$100,000 liability insurance or surety bond on structure/building
3. Registration must be completed within **45 days** of written notice from the City or within **45 days** of purchasing a vacant commercial property or vacant commercial lot without written notice from the City.
4. Registration of vacant commercial property must be renewed annually until the building is occupied or exempted.
5. Registration of vacant commercial lot must be renewed annually until the lot is sold, developed, or exempted.

D. FEES

The registration fee for commercial structures within the Central Business District and the 16th Avenue Corridor is \$1,100 for initial registration of the vacant building with an annual renewal fee of \$0.01/sq.ft (minimum \$100). A \$100 discount is applied for timely (within 45 days) registration.

The registration fee for commercial vacant lots within the Central Business District and the 16th Avenue Corridor is \$500 with an annual renewal fee of \$300. A \$50 discount is applied for timely (within 45 days) registration.

E. MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

1. As specified in the Laurel Code of Ordinances, property must be structurally sound, weatherproof, and free of pests
2. All doors, windows, and openings must be secured
3. Vacant Commercial Lots must be kept free of debris and overgrown vegetation, as specified in the Laurel Code of Ordinances
4. Must comply with additional requirements in designated historic or overlay districts
5. Property owner must submit rehabilitation plan update every six months to the Inspection Department

F. WAIVERS OF REGISTRATION FEES (Up to 12 Months)

The City, at its discretion upon request by the property owner, may allow waivers of registration fees for up to 12 months in the following circumstances:

1. Properties with active utility services
2. Properties with valid construction permits
3. Disaster-damaged properties under remediation
4. Properties that are actively marketed and well-maintained
5. Vacant lots that are regularly maintained, mowed, and free of debris and overgrown vegetation in accordance with standards set forth in the Laurel Code of Ordinances.

In order to request a waiver of registration fee, property owners must complete a waiver request form and submit to the Inspection Department. Waivers of registration fees are subject to revocation if, upon inspection, properties/lots are found to be in violation of aforementioned maintenance standards.

G. PENALTIES

Failure to register or comply will result in the following:

1. \$500 late fee for delayed registration
2. Doubling of inspection fees each year if non-compliance continues
3. Fines up to \$1,000.00
4. Liens may be placed to recover unpaid fees and fines added to property taxes
5. Civil penalties, administrative enforcement and misdemeanor criminal charges

H. ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement will be carried out by City Code Enforcement officials with formal timelines for compliance. Regular inspection of properties subject to this ordinance will be conducted by the Inspection Department.

This Ordinance shall take effect from and after thirty (30) days following the second reading of the ordinance.

Thereafter Councilperson Capers, moved for the adoption and approval of the Second

Reading of said Ordinance, which motion was seconded by Councilperson Carmichael.

Following opening for discussion, President Carmichael stated that there was a recommendation from Administration to postpone Second reading indefinitely, for further work sessions on the language of the Ordinance. Councilperson Capers moved to postpone the motion indefinitely, seconded by Councilperson Allen.

Upon roll call vote, the result was as follows:

YEAS: Capers, Kelly, Scruggs, Carmichael, Thomas, Amos, Allen

NAYS: None

ABSTAINING: None

ABSENT: None

The President thereupon declared the motion postponed indefinitely, this the 7th day of **OCTOBER**, A.D. 2025.

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

ATTESTED AND SUBMITTED TO THE MAYOR BY THE CLERK OF THE COUNCIL ON

_____.

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

APPROVED () DATE _____

VETOED () DATE _____

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

* * * * *

Min. of 10/7/2025 ; Book No. 104 ; Page No. _____ ; Agenda Item No. 4H