



CITY OF KILLEEN

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Vacant Building Registration Program – Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. What is the Vacant Structure Registration Program?

- A.** The City of Killeen recently created the Vacant Structure Registration Program with the goal of revitalizing Killeen’s core downtown and preserving the historic architecture within the nationally recognized historic district. The purpose of the Vacant Structure Registration program is to compel property owners to make needed repairs to their historically significant buildings and attract new and expanding businesses to Downtown Killeen.

Q. When was this program established, and by whom?

- A.** On August 4, 2020, the Killeen City Council adopted the Vacant Structure Registration Ordinance (Ordinance No. 20-032) by a unanimous vote. This ordinance requires the owners of vacant structures within the Historic Overlay District (HOD) to register their property with the City’s Planning and Development Services Department and pay an annual registration fee. Prior to adoption by the City Council, the ordinance also received unanimous support from the City’s Heritage Preservation Board and Planning and Zoning Commission.

Q. Why is the Vacant Structure Registration Program needed?

- A.** The purpose of the Vacant Structure Registration Program is to support the revitalization of Killeen’s Historic District. Over the past several years, Downtown Killeen has suffered considerable disinvestment and the number of vacant or underutilized buildings has steadily increased. Unfortunately, many of Killeen’s historic buildings have become abandoned and fallen into disrepair. In order to breathe new life into the Downtown area, the Killeen City Council found it necessary to adopt an ordinance that would incentivize property owners to make much-needed repairs to their buildings. In doing so, the goal is to encourage the establishment of new businesses and create vibrancy in the Downtown area. By encouraging negligent and absentee property owners to take responsibility for their vacant properties, the intent is that prospective business owners will find suitable locations in which to establish or expand their business and will feel confident to invest in Downtown Killeen.

Q. What properties are impacted by the Vacant Structure Registration Program?

- A.** The Vacant Structure Registration Ordinance requires the owners of vacant buildings within the Historic Overlay District (HOD) to register their property with the City's Planning and Development Services Department. The HOD consists of approximately seven square blocks within the core of Downtown Killeen and is comprised of commercial buildings constructed between 1895 and 1960. This area, also known as the Killeen Downtown Historic District, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014 and is nationally recognized for its historic and architectural significance.

Q. Who is required to participate in the Vacant Structure Registration Program?

- A.** This program is geared toward buildings within the HOD that have been vacant for more than one month. The ordinance defines a vacant structure as one in which "all activity for which the structure was built or intended to be used has ceased, or reasonably appears to have ceased, for thirty (30) days or more." This means the owner of a building which has seen no visible activity for more than 30 days is required to complete the registration process and pay any associated fees. Any building within the HOD that does not have a Certificate of Occupancy or does not have an active utility account may be deemed to be vacant.

Q. What is the process to register a vacant building?

- A.** The owner of a vacant building or structure has ninety (90) days from the date that written notice is issued by the City that the building has been deemed vacant within which to register their property. Upon issuance of a notice to register, the owner of the vacant building must complete the Vacant Structure Registration form and submit all associated documentation. This includes providing a floorplan of the building, proof of property insurance, a no trespass affidavit, and a Comprehensive Plan of Action Form detailing a timeline for correcting code enforcement violations, conducting rehabilitation and maintenance of the structure, and a plan for making use of the building. The Comprehensive Plan of Action Form must be updated every six (6) months. The property owner is also responsible for paying all fees associated with the registration of their vacant structure. If a building remains vacant for more than one year, the property must be re-registered each year.

Q. What fees are associated with the Vacant Structure Registration Program?

- A.** The fee to register a vacant structure is five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for the first year it is vacant. After the first year, the registration fee increases by fifty dollars (\$50.00) per year for each year the building remains vacant. At the time of registration, the City will also collect an inspection fee in the amount of one cent (\$.01) per square foot. For those property owners who fail to register their building by the registration deadline, a one hundred and fifty dollar (\$150.00) late fee will also be assessed.

Q. What happens if the owner of a vacant structure neglects or refuses to register their property?

A. It is important that owners of vacant buildings within the HOD complete the registration process in a timely manner in order to avoid incurring additional expenses. Property owners who have failed to register their vacant building by the registration deadline are subject to a one hundred and fifty (\$150.00) late fee. In addition to the late fee, failure to register a vacant building is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00). Property owners will also be subject to applicable court costs.

Q. Can I request a waiver of the registration fee?

A. Unfortunately, the ordinance does not give City staff the authority to waive the required registration fees. Therefore, we are not able to waive the registration fee. However, under limited circumstances and if all other registration requirements have been met, City staff may be able to work with property owners on a deferred payment plan at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Q. Where can I find more information about the Vacant Structure Registration requirements?

A. More information about the requirements to register a vacant structure can be found in Section 31-393 of the City of Killeen Code of Ordinances. A checklist of required documentation can also be found on the first page of the Vacant Structure Registration form. You may also contact the City's Revitalization Planner, Ms. Jamie Ambrose, by phone at (254) 501-7641 or by email at jambrose@killeentexas.gov.