

## **Vacant Building Registration Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. How do I report a Vacant Building?**

- A. Call the City of Cincinnati Customer Service complaint line 311 or use the customer service online complaint system <https://cagis.hamilton-co.org/311>

### **2. What happens after I call 311 or file the complaint online?**

- A. The complaint will be routed to the Building and Inspection; an inspector will be routed to inspect the property to investigate and confirm the building is vacant and requires a Vacant Building Registration.

### **3. How will I know what happened after the inspector performs an inspection?**

- A. The inspection results can be tract through the CAGIS Activity using the following website: <https://cagismaps.hamilton-co.org/PropertyActivity/cagisreport>

### **4. What is the Vacant Building Registration Program.**

A. In February 2025, Cincinnati's City Council passed an ordinance establishing the Vacant Building Registration (VBR) Program. The VBR program requires owners to register their vacant properties with the City of Cincinnati's Buildings & Inspections Department. Registered properties require routine inspections to ensure the property is maintained. This program was created to address vacant properties before they become blighted properties within our communities. The VBR program will be housed under the Buildings and Inspections Department. **It will become part of the Department's suite of programs geared towards addressing vacant buildings:**

1. Vacant Building Registration Program
2. Vacant Foreclosed Property Registration Program
3. Vacated Building Maintenance License Program

#### **These programs will work together to:**

- Monitor the over 4,500 vacant buildings across the city
- Prevent buildings from falling into expensive disrepair
- Reduce crime on blocks with a higher density of vacant buildings

- Create safer street blocks

This Program is a shared collaboration between the City of Cincinnati Buildings and Inspections as well as the Police and Fire Departments.

**5. What is the difference between the Vacant Building Registration, Vacant Foreclosed Property Registration and the Vacant Building Maintenance License Program?A:**

- **Vacant Building Registration**

This program requires all properties that have been vacant for 180 days or more to register with the City of Cincinnati's Buildings and Inspections Department. Registered buildings will be subject to routine inspections (interior and exterior) throughout the year to ensure the building stays safe and in line with the Cincinnati Building Code.

- **Vacant Foreclosed Property Registration**

This program is for residential properties only. To be in the program, the property must be in the foreclosure process and found vacant. It is required to have no outward signs of foreclosure. Mortgage providers are required to complete registration and provide contact information to address property conditions. Mortgage providers are also encouraged to install burglar alarms to decrease to increase protection of the property.

- **Vacated Building Maintenance License**

This program is for properties that have been identified as uninhabitable due to serious code violations. Properties within this program will receive a Notice to Keep Vacant, along with notification that inaction could lead to condemnation or civil/criminal charges. Property owners are required to make repairs and must meet the 13-point preservation criteria. Properties within this program must also maintain liability insurance, which is the minimum level of compliance.

**6. When does the Vacant Building Registration go into effect?**

- A. The City of Cincinnati passed ordinance 39-2025 on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, creating the Vacant Building Registration Program, Ordinance 39-2025 stated the ordinance shall take effect in early 2026.

**7. How do I register my vacant building?**

A. You Must:

- Submit a **Vacant Building Registration Form** ([link](#)).
- Include the **required registration fee**

- Provide proof of **liability insurance**

**8. What is considered a “vacant building”?**

A. A *vacant building* is any building that, for **180 days or more**:

- Has not been legally lived in;
- Has all lawful business or construction operations stopped; or
- Is **95% or more unoccupied**.

**9. What are the fees to register my Vacant Building?**

A. The fee required to register a vacant building is \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

VBR fees are listed under 1125-07 Vacant Building Registration.

(3) All vacant building registrations shall be accompanied by the applicable fee. All fees required under this section are debts due and payable to the city.

**10. How long is the registration good for?**

A. The registration is good for six months and requires renewal every six months.

**11. When do I have to register my vacant building?**

A. You must register:

- **Within 30 calendar days** the building reaching vacant status; or
- **Within 30 calendar days** of taking ownership of a vacant building, whichever is later.

**12. Does the Vacant Building Registration require an inspection?**

A. Yes, The Vacant Building Registration requires an interior and exterior inspection after the application is received. The property would then follow a monthly reinspection (exterior only) cycle. Property owners can submit a work plan to be exempt from the Vacant Building Registration Program – *see Question # 17 for more information regarding registration exemption.*

**13. Do I need to renew my registration?**

A. Yes. As long as the building remains vacant, you must:

- **Renew your registration before it expires** (every 6 months);
- Submit any **required renewal fees**;
- Update the City with any **new information** about the property.

**14. What ongoing responsibilities do I have after registering?**

A. You must:

- Notify the City of any **changes** (ownership, occupancy, contact info).
- Appoint a local representative who lives within **100 miles** of the property to handle emergencies or maintenance.
- Keep the building maintained in accordance with all codes.

**15. What if the inspector finds compliant or non-complaint conditions at my property.**

A. If the inspector finds compliant conditions during the initial inspection, then the registration certification will be issued, and monthly exterior follow up inspection will occur. If the Inspector finds non complaint conditions, then a notice of condition violation will be issued, once repairs are completed reinspection will be required, once complaint the registration certification will be issued, and monthly exterior follow up inspection will occur.

**16. I disagree with the determination that my property is vacant and requires a vacant building registration, how do I appeal the determination?**

A. There are two paths that can be taken to appeal the vacant determination:

- a. Request / File a petition for a Director Determination (Recommended Path)
- b. Appeal

- **The owner of the property will need to request/file a petition for a Director Determination: (This is the recommended path)**

*Director Determination- Any person who has a bona fide controversy with the interpretation, application or enforcement of the provisions of this section may petition the director within 30 days from the date of the mailing of notification of the requirement to register for a written decision, order, or adjudication pursuant to section 1108-8:1 of the CBC*

Or

- **You May Also Appeal:**

Property owners can appeal to the [Board Building of Appeals](#) and/or the [Board of Housing Appeals](#)

## 17. Are there any buildings that are exempt from registration?

A. Yes. The following buildings **do not need to register**:

- Buildings that are already covered under different City codes (i.e – properties in the Vacant Building Maintenance License and the Vacant Foreclosed Property Registration programs).
- Buildings owned by the federal government, the State of Ohio, or City/County owned entities.
- Buildings under **active renovation or construction** with approved permits and a timeline for completion.
- Residential buildings (1-3 units) that **have recently been occupied by the owner for the last three of the previous nine months**, and that the owner plans to move back within the next 3 months.
- Buildings with an **approved Vacated Building Maintenance Plan** (See definition below) A **Vacated Building Maintenance Plan** is a **written plan** submitted to the City explaining how the property will be:
  1. Maintained to meet code.
  2. Rehabbed, reoccupied, or demolished.
  3. Managed with a clear timeline.

If the plan is violated, the City can revoke it and require full registration within 14 days.

**Apply for a Vacated Building Maintenance Plan: [Click Here](#)**

## 18. My building is in foreclosure; Do I Still need to Register?

A. If you are in the process of foreclosure and no longer residing at the property, you will not be required to register the building. Vacant buildings in foreclosure are subject to the City's Vacant Foreclosed Property Registration (Cincinnati Municipal Code Chapter 1123). There are registration obligations for properties in foreclosure for mortgagees (mortgage companies) and persons in control of foreclosed properties.

## 19. What if I have multiple Vacant Buildings?

A. You must register each property separately.

## 20. I have filed bankruptcy; Do I still need to Register?

A. Yes, registration of the vacant building is still required. Bankruptcy proceedings do not transfer the property ownership, you are responsible until the property ownership has been transferred with the Hamilton County Auditor.

**21. Do I have to register my Vacant condominium unit?**

A. If the unit is within a larger building consisting of condominium units or in a community of condominium units then NO registration is not required. If more than 95% of the building is vacant, the property should be registered for the Vacant Building Registration program.

**22. What are the penalties for non-compliance?**

- **Failing to register** is a **Class D civil offense**, with a new violation possible each day the building is not registered.
- **Failing to keep accurate info** (like contact info or building status) is a **Class A civil offense**, also chargeable daily.

**23. Who do I contact with questions?**

**You can email the Vacant Building Registration Program Coordinator at:**  
[CincyVBR@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:CincyVBR@cincinnati-oh.gov)