Vacant Building Registration Program & Fees

Development Services Department

City Council Presentation
September 2, 2025

Proposal Summary

- Vacant buildings make up nearly 20% of code violation cases, posing risks to crime and fire hazards.

- Neglected buildings strain city resources by requiring frequent police, fire, and code compliance responses.

- The abatement budget was cut in half for FY 2025—from $600K to $300K, limiting the city's ability to manage these issues.

- A proposed vacant building registration program aims to:
  - Generate revenue to offset maintenance and demolition costs
  - Promote public safety
  - Combat blight and deterioration
  - Preserve property values and neighborhood stability

- Similar programs have shown success in San Antonio and El Paso.

The Opportunity

- **Current Challenge:** Code Compliance struggles to identify contacts who are responsible for vacant buildings that have become nuisance properties.

- **Proposed Solution:** A registration program would:
  - Require owners to register buildings vacant for 30+ days
  - Mandate a point of contact, plus a plan and timeline to bring the property up to code and reoccupy it

- **Benefits:**
  - Establishes clear communication channels & encourages responsible maintenance
  - Speeds up resolution of unsafe conditions
  - Enables cost recovery for inspections, abatements, board-ups, and demolitions

This initiative shifts accountability to property owners and strengthens the City's ability to manage vacant structures efficiently.

Financial Impact

- **No implementation cost:**
  - The program will be managed by existing Code Compliance staff, requiring no new funding.
- **Fees:**
  - $250 registration fee (residential & commercial) and $50 annual inspection fee
  - First-time registrations are pro-rated & annual renewals due by January 31st
- **Revenue Potential:**
  - With 1,380 known vacant buildings, projected annual revenue is $414,000

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT 5
456 (33%)	406 (29%)	271 (20%)	167 (12%)	80 (6%)

- **Use of Funds:**
  - Revenue will support Code Compliance operations, to include, mowing and clearing debris from properties, securing vacant buildings, and demolishing substandard structures.

<u>This model offers a self-sustaining way to reduce blight and improve neighborhood safety without burdening the city's general budget.</u>

District 1

District 2

District 3

DISTRICT 3

271 (20%)

District 4

DISTRICT 4

167 (12%)

District 5

DISTRICT 5

80 (6%)

Ordinance Revisions

- **Current Code:** Section 13-3006 outlines an optional plan for vacant buildings.
- **Proposed Change:** Make registration mandatory for buildings vacant 30+ days.
- **Registry Impact:**
  - Once registered, citations/complaints are suspended under Sec. 13-3006.b.1.
- **New Requirements for Owners:**
  - Provide accurate contact info
  - Submit a rehabilitation plan and timeline
  - Maintain the building and property regularly
  - Comply with enforcement measures
- **Penalties:**
  - Failure to register within 30 days of notice may result in a citation
  - Maximum fine: $500

These revisions strengthen accountability and streamline enforcement while giving owners a clear path to compliance.

Operations Plan

- **Routine Inspections:**
  - Code Compliance staff will continue inspecting vacant properties to ensure they're secure and properly maintained.
- **Program Implementation:**
  - Staff will identify qualifying structures, engage owners, and manage notification and registration.

- **System Updates:**
  - A new case type for Vacant Building Registration (VBR) will be added in GovQA to support workflow tracking.
  - A new permit type will be created in INFOR, allowing owners to register and pay fees through Development Services.

This plan leverages existing staff and systems to efficiently launch and manage the program without requiring additional resources.

Stakeholder Updates

After discussions with the CBHBA and CCAR this week, Some updates to the ordinance were added:

- Reverted to original definition of a vacant building
- Clarified means of abatement
- Clarified Appeals process with “shall” instead of “may”
- Added specific appeals criteria
- Annual review of fees with stakeholders
- Specified that the VBR fee will go directly to Code Compliance abatement
- Exempted properties actively listed with MLS
- Exempted new construction, remodels, and general repairs with permit

Alternatives

Without the adoption of the VBR fee there are 2 alternatives:

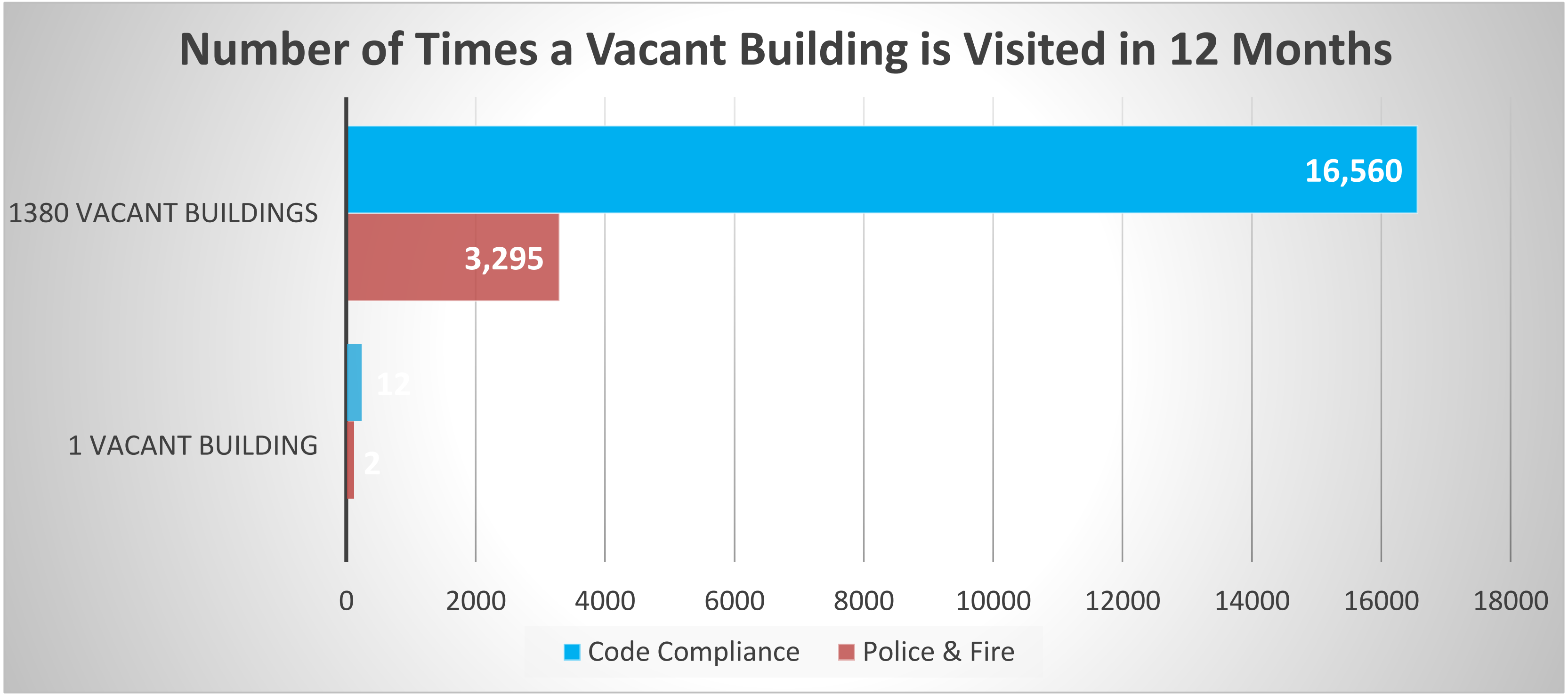
<u>Alternative 1</u>
Cut three (3) filled Code Officer 1 positions - $194,718
Cut three (3) filled Code Officer 2 positions - $229,560

<u>Alternative 2</u>
Cut two (2) filled Code Officer 1 positions - $129,812
Cut all currently budgeted abatement - $300,000

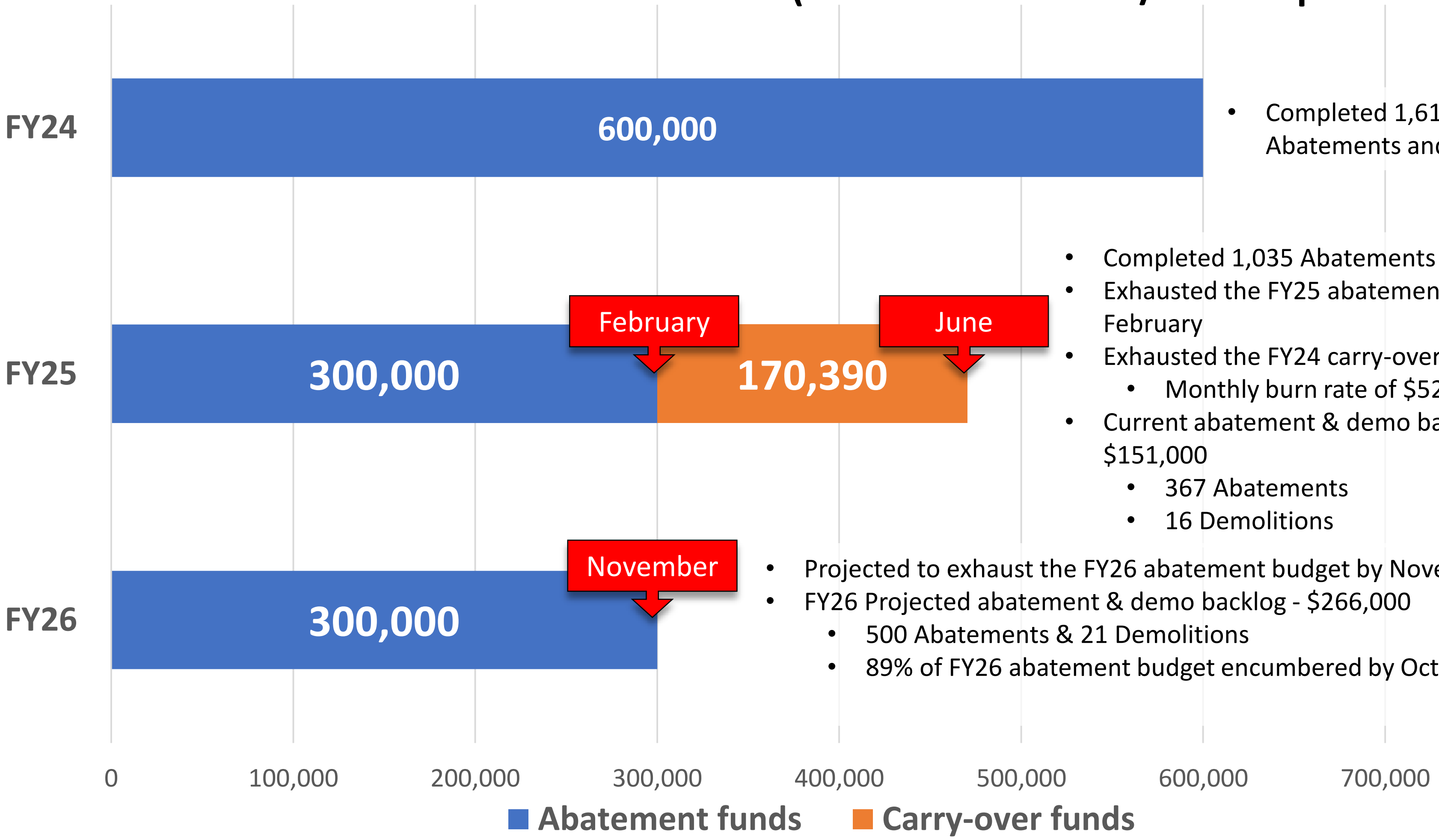
this is in addition to the proposed cuts of two (2) vacant Code Officer 1 positions and one (1) vacant Administrative position - $213,854

Questions?

Number of Inspections / Calls for Service / Visits to Vacant Buildings (Nuisance Properties)



FY24 - FY26 (530220 Demolition/Clean-Up Service)



- Completed 1,614 Abatements and 35 Demos

- Completed 1,035 Abatements and 46 Demos
- Exhausted the FY25 abatement budget in February
- Exhausted the FY24 carry-over funds in June
  - Monthly burn rate of $52,266
- Current abatement & demo backlog - $151,000
  - 367 Abatements
  - 16 Demolitions

- Projected to exhaust the FY26 abatement budget by November
- FY26 Projected abatement & demo backlog - $266,000
  - 500 Abatements & 21 Demolitions
  - 89% of FY26 abatement budget encumbered by October 1