

CHAPTER 15.34  
**VACANT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY AND VACANT LOT REGISTRATION**

**§ 15.34.010. Title.**

The ordinance codified in this chapter shall be known as "Vacant Commercial Property and Vacant Lot Registration Ordinance" and is hereinafter referred to within this Chapter 15.34, as "this chapter."

(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

**§ 15.34.020. Purpose.**

Recognizing that abandoned and vacant buildings and lots contribute to blight in the City, discourage economic development, and diminish appreciation of property values, endanger public health and safety, attract criminal activity, and create fire hazards, it is the responsibility of property owners to prevent buildings and vacant lots from becoming a burden to the neighborhood and community and a threat to the public health, safety, and welfare. The City Council finds that vacant buildings and lots result in increased expenditures for police, fire, and code enforcement inspections and calls. Maintenance of the public health, safety, and welfare thus requires the City to maintain an accurate registration of all vacant commercial buildings and vacant lots and to impose each of the requirements, procedures and penalties set forth herein.

(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

**§ 15.34.030. Definitions.**

For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms are defined as set out in this section:

"Commercial building" means a building, accessory structure, mobile or modular structure, or other structure adapted to permanent occupancy for commercial purposes. A "commercial building" also includes any structure, or any portion of a structure, located within the city and designed or intended for occupancy as a hotel or motel.

"Commercial unit" means each separate space within a commercial building designed or intended for occupancy.

"Securing," as used in this chapter, is the same as defined under Chapter 15.32.

"Vacant commercial building" means a commercial building where greater than 50% of the nonresidential commercial units within the building have been unoccupied for over 30 days, unless one of the following applies:

1. There is a valid building permit for alterations or rehabilitation, excluding standard maintenance and repairs, of the commercial building per the requirements of the California Building Code.
2. The owner or leaseholder has filed an application for required permits for the lawful use and occupancy of the commercial building, where the application is still active per the requirements of the Development Code.
3. In the case of a structure intended as a hotel or motel where the owner or operator is actively engaged in operating such premises as a hotel or motel. At a minimum, active



engagement as a hotel or motel requires that the owner or operator participate as a certified registrant of the Uniform Transient Occupancy Tax Ordinance of the City of Stockton with respect to such premises.

4. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, the building conforms to the standards set forth in Chapter 15.32.

"Vacant Lot" means a lot within any zoning district unless one of the following applies:

1. There is a valid building permit for the improvement of the lot.
2. The owner or leaseholder has filed an application for required permits for the lawful use and improvement of the lot, where the application is still active per the requirements of the Development Code.
3. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, the lot conforms to the standards set forth in Chapter 15.32.

(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

#### **§ 15.34.040. Registration.**

- A. The owner(s) of a vacant commercial building or vacant lot shall, within 30 days after it has become vacant as defined in this chapter, register the commercial building or lot with the City of Stockton.
- B. An annual fee, in an amount established by City Council resolution, shall accompany the registration form and be paid annually for the duration of vacancy. Funds derived from said fees shall be allocated to Police Department, Neighborhood Services Section, and used to offset the City's cost of inspection and enforcement under this chapter.
- C. Any subsequent owner of a vacant commercial building or lot must register or re-register the building or lot with the City designated officer within 30 days of any transfer of any ownership interest in the building or lot.
- D. Registered commercial buildings or lots subject to this chapter shall remain registered as long as the properties remain vacant. If the owner, or a lawful tenant of the owner, occupies the premises in a manner that complies with this chapter and with all other applicable provisions of State and local law, a commercial building may be removed from the department's registry. A commercial building may be removed from the registry upon owner's submission of a de-registration form provided by the department and subject to department approval confirming occupation.

(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

#### **§ 15.34.050. Registration requirements.**

- A. The required registration shall be submitted on the form provided by the City and shall include:
  1. The name, current mailing address, phone number and any other contact information of the owner and property manager or responsible party as well as the names and addresses of all known lien holders and all other parties with a legal or equitable ownership



interest in the building.

2. The addresses of the commercial building and the Assessor Parcel Number(s).
  3. Square footage and occupancy rating(s) of the commercial building.
  4. State the most recent legal use(s) of the commercial building.
  5. The period of time the commercial building or lot is expected to remain vacant, and a plan and timetable for returning the commercial building or lot to appropriate occupancy or use.
  6. Statement as to whether there is fire and liability insurance coverage.
  7. Methods by which the owner has secured the commercial building against unauthorized entry.
  8. Provide such other information as the department may require.
  9. Proof of insurance in compliance with Section 15.34.100.
- B. Upon registration of a vacant commercial building or vacant lot pursuant to this chapter, the owner shall be required to provide authorization to the City of Stockton Police Department to arrest for trespassing pursuant to California Penal Code Section 602, any persons found on the property without the owner's consent or without lawful purpose.
- (Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

#### **§ 15.34.060. Signage.**

Any vacant commercial building shall be posted with the name and 24-hour contact phone number of the trustee, beneficiary, owner, realtor, or property management company. The posting shall be no less than (18 by 24) inches and shall be of a font that is legible from a public right-of-way and shall contain along with the name and 24-hour contact number the words "THIS PROPERTY MANAGED BY" and "TO REPORT PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS CALL." The posting shall be placed on the interior of a window facing the street to the front of the property so it is visible from the street or secured to the exterior of the building or structure facing the street to the front of the property so it is visible from the street; if no such area exists, the posting shall be placed on a stake of sufficient size to support the posting in a location that is visible from the street to the front of the property but not readily accessible to vandals. Exterior postings must be constructed of and printed with weather resistant materials. Compliance with this section shall satisfy Section 15.32.050(C), if applicable.

(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

#### **§ 15.34.070. Inspection by City.**

A City-designated officer or their appointee may inspect or cause to be inspected any premises in the City for the purposes of enforcing and assuring compliance with the provisions of this chapter, the Fire Code, and safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of the general public. Upon the request of a City building official, code enforcement officer, Fire Marshal, or a designated appointee, an owner shall provide access to all interior portions of any vacant commercial building



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or suspected vacant commercial building in order to permit inspections.  
(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

**§ 15.34.080. Owner inspection requirements.**

The owner(s) or their property manager shall inspect a vacant commercial building or vacant lot on a monthly basis to determine if the building or lot is in compliance with this chapter or if notification of noncompliance is reported to the owner(s) or their local property manager.  
(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

**§ 15.34.090. Penalties.**

- A. Violations of this chapter shall be treated as a strict liability offense regardless of intent. Any person, firm and/or corporation that violates any portion of this chapter shall be subject to prosecution, public nuisance abatement and/or administrative enforcement pursuant to Chapter 1.24 of the Stockton Municipal Code or any other enforcement and legal remedies available to the City under the law.
- B. All penalties assessed shall be payable directly to the City.
- C. Any and all civil penalties assessed under this section shall be billed to the owner or other responsible party. Failure or refusal to pay any and all such penalties permits the City to pursue any and all available legal remedies for the enforcement and collection of such penalties, including, but not limited to, civil actions being filed in any court of competent jurisdiction, abatement of nuisances maintained in violation of this chapter, institution of injunction, mandamus, or other appropriate action or proceedings to enforce the penalty provisions of this chapter.
- D. In addition to all other lawful remedies available to the city to address any violation of this chapter, the code compliance officer or his or her designee may impose an administrative penalty pursuant to Chapter 1.40.  
(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)

**§ 15.34.100. Liability insurance.**

The property owner shall maintain liability insurance on vacant buildings and vacant lots subject to registration. A certificate of insurance for each vacant property shall be provided to the City with the vacant building registration form, whenever an insurance policy has expired, when there is a change of insurance carrier, and upon request from the City. All insurance policies for vacant property shall require notice to the City in the event of cancellation of insurance or a reduction in coverage. The minimum coverage amount shall be \$1,000,000 of general liability coverage.  
(Ord. 2025-07-29-1602, 7/29/2025)