



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 1

COUNCILMEMBER LISA HERBOLD

Dear Director Torgelson,

I am writing to you today to follow up on my interest in the development of an enhanced Vacant Building Monitoring Program. In the 2018 Budget the Council included funding for staffing necessary to develop an enhanced Vacant Building Monitoring Program. Consistent with the language in Council Bill 118971 the Council also passed a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting a report on program options including:

- (1) identification of possible triggering events for enrollment or registration in the program;*
- (2) minimum maintenance standards for vacant buildings, which may include use of higher grade materials, such as polycarbonate sheets or security panels, or other strategies to preserve the appearance and condition of the structure;*
- (3) authority for the SDCI Director to create a standardized, uniform, streamlined building assessment or valuation process for chapter 22.208 of the HBMC;*
- (4) a revised penalty structure for failure to comply with vacant building maintenance standards;*
- (5) a tiered fee structure to allow for cost recovery while minimizing costs for participants whose buildings are well maintained and not subject to unauthorized entry; and*
- (6) authority to the SDCI Director to establish a complementary program whereby owners of vacant buildings may elect to have those buildings occupied by temporary caretakers who are unsheltered or face barriers to housing and are identified as potential caretakers by a human services provider or similar organization.*

In light of the March 31 report date, I would like to confirm that the 2018 budget funds have resulted in a hire of staff to complete this body of work. I also want to identify, as a resource, the Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO) Database to compare and contrast different program models. There were fewer than 20 examples of jurisdictions in the United States with VPROs in 2000. Reportedly, as of May 2012, there were more than 550 local VPROs in the United States. Furthermore, the passage of a VPRO is likely to provide better data regarding the total amount of vacant buildings as well as the nature of those vacancies. The VPRO will allow the City to construct a cost recovery model to monitoring vacant buildings and evaluate them in a timely manner. The City will also have a better understanding of the issues and how to develop accurate and data driven solutions.

In addition, I would like to express my support for what is referred to as the "Hybrid-model VPRO." Hybrid model VPROs have requirements that for non-foreclosure related vacancies require property owners to register properties after a certain length of vacancy and for foreclosure related vacancies require registration at the time either a notice of default is issued or intent to foreclose is filed as a part of a judicial proceeding or advertised by the mortgagee or servicer as a part of a nonjudicial foreclosure process.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that the development of a pro-active monitoring program is a significant endeavor. However, as you know, this issue is of particular importance to me as District 1 has the second highest number of vacant building complaints closely following District 2, with 189 and 208 respectively between the years of 2013 and 2016. A pilot program within one or two geographic areas with a high concentration of vacant buildings might be a worthy consideration for your March 31st SLI report as well.

Sincerely,



Lisa Herbold
Seattle City Councilmember District 1, West Seattle/South Park

cc: Council President Bruce Harrell
Councilmember Rob Johnson