

Backup Information

For the June 6, 2023 Staff Report on the Strategic Roadmap Adoption

At the May 23, 2023 work session, Council requested more information about the following two Strategic Roadmap projects:

Q12 - Engage owners of vacant building properties to encourage activation, starting in the downtown, and enforce against owners of empty storefronts

The Economic Development and Code Enforcement Divisions partner closely on the City's vacant property owner engagement strategy. Economic Development staff members continuously attempt to engage property owners or their brokerage representatives for key properties to build relationships. Economic Development offers marketing support to help property owners generate lease leads and provides Business Concierge Program support to aid new tenants with permitting needs.

However, there are instances where these owners do not respond to staff and their sites become sources of calls for service and/or blight. In these instances, Economic Development works with Code Enforcement to use all the City's tools to encourage the owner to engage and bring their property into conformance with applicable codes and regulations. Additionally, Code Enforcement provides educational materials through direct mailing and multi-media outlets to educate the public on property maintenance and upkeep. While these efforts are an important component of compliance, staff has found a positive approach of engaging the property owner helps facilitate change at a pace and level not typically observed under a standard enforcement process.

In FY 2024, staff anticipates increasing our engagement efforts with vacant property owners, including requesting regular updates from the owners and/or their commercial brokers on leasing inquiry interests and prospective tenant feedback. Economic Development staff will provide these stakeholders with available data to support site selection decision-making including data on traffic counts, leasing rates, new developments in the pipeline, locations of potential competitors or consumers pools, and information about city fees and permitting processing timelines.

The City's existing Vacant Property Ordinance was adopted in October 2019¹. The original intent of the ordinance was to focus on neglected vacant properties rather than vacant store fronts. As such, the current ordinance may not be optimally tailored to address the issues specific to vacant store fronts unless conditions of the storefront/building are found to be in violation of the adopted standards for neglected vacant properties. In other words, having an empty storefront does not necessarily qualify as neglect.

¹ <https://hayward.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4165482&GUID=2D33021A-3778-4203-A80B-EBB0D4F12A61&Options=&Search=>

In addition, the Code Enforcement Division is currently constrained by staffing limitations and existing workload from other programs and calls for service. As a result, the capacity to effectively enforce the ordinance through regular proactive monitoring is compromised. To address these challenges, the Code Enforcement Division has implemented a quarterly inspection protocol utilizing a three-person team.

In FY 2024, in an effort to further address vacant storefronts, staff will be implementing an additional layer of permit review on vacant properties to capture conditions which are in violation of ordinance standards but not necessarily apparent from street observations. While these measures are intended to enhance the enforcement of Vacant Property Standards, it could further strain the division's limited resources and potentially lead to delays in addressing other important matters.

Upon direction from Council, staff can provide an informational report in FY 2024 outlining existing activities, regulatory limitations, and staffing challenges. As stated in the May 23, 2023 staff report on the Strategic Roadmap, staff will continue to work on the engagement activities listed above. However, staff does not plan to revisit the Vacant Property Ordinance in FY 2024 due to lack of staff capacity.

H4 - Continue to explore safe parking options along with encampment management

Council adopted the Let's House Hayward Strategic Plan in July 2021². The Plan included the recommendation to exploring a "safe parking site with progressive engagement services, including for those living in RVs." The plan estimated that the annual operating budget to manage such a site would be approximately \$500,000. This does not include the startup costs to create such a site, which could be in the millions of dollars depending on the amenities.

In 2022, Community Services staff hired a consultant to do a high level analysis of the steps to create a safe parking site. Part of the recommendation from both the Let's House Hayward Plan and the consultant is to ensure that any future safe parking site has the needed health and safety amenities, such as security and showers, as well as housing navigation services, similar to Hayward's Navigation Center. In addition, the ideal location would be able to easily support such services without causing a substantial burden on the neighborhood immediately surrounding the site.

In FY 2024, Community Services will continue to monitor locations for a possible future site and will actively consider grant applications if State funding for safe parking sites becomes available. However, as stated in the May 23 staff report, staff does not plan to conduct additional work on this project in FY 2024, due to competing priorities like the St. Regis Center in addition to standard Division workload, including administering the Community Agency Funding process, overseeing the Community Development Block Grant and Hayward Operated Paratransit, as well as Hayward Navigation Center operations. Staff will revisit this project in FY 2025.

² <https://hayward.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5028014&GUID=E5369F11-C504-413E-B317-E2797DF45328&Options=&Search=>