[Building Code - Registration of Vacant/Abandoned Buildings; Maintenance and Security Requirements; Annual Fee and Penalties for Violation.]

Ordinance amending the San Francisco Building Code by adding Section 103A.4 to require the owner of a vacant or abandoned building to register the building with the Department of Building Inspection, require the owner to maintain the grounds and the exterior and interior of the building secured and in good condition, and provide that a property in violation of the requirements is a public nuisance; and by amending Section 110, Table 1A-J to establish an annual registration fee; adopting environmental and other findings.

NOTE: Additions are single-underline italics Times New Roman; deletions are strike-through italics Times New Roman. Board amendment additions are double-underlined; Board amendment deletions are strikethrough normal.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. Findings.

(a) Environmental Findings. The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this Ordinance are in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code sections 21000 et seq.). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 090554 and is incorporated herein by reference.

(b) General Findings.

(1) Abandoned or vacant buildings are a major cause and source of blight in both residential and nonresidential neighborhoods, especially when the owner of the property fails to actively maintain and manage it.
(2) Boarded buildings, substandard or unkempt properties, and long-term vacancies discourage economic development, lower property values or retard their appreciation, and constitute a public nuisance.

(3) Vacant properties are often overgrown with weeds and other vegetation, used as a dumping ground for debris, toxic or other hazardous substances, and used drug needles. Blighted vacant properties also attract vagrants, gang members, and other criminal elements as prime locations to conduct their illegal activities.

(4) When the owner of a vacant or abandoned building allows the building to deteriorate to such an extent that the building must be demolished, persons and neighboring properties could be endangered. In these circumstances, the owner of the building can often evade Planning Code notice and hearing procedures that would otherwise be required, and the neighborhood and the City as a whole lose an important and sometimes historically significant resource.

Section 2. The San Francisco Building Code is hereby amended by adding Section 103A.4, to read as follows:

103A.4. Vacant or Abandoned Buildings – Annual registration; registration fee; maintenance and security requirements.

103A.4.1. Definition. A building shall be defined as a vacant or abandoned if it (1) is unoccupied and unsecured; or (2) is unoccupied and secured by boarding or other similar means; or (3) is unoccupied and unsafe as defined in Section 102 of this Code; or (4) is unoccupied and has multiple code violations; or (5) has been unoccupied for over 30 days. A building which is partially unoccupied and has been cited for blight under Chapter 80 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, shall also be deemed a vacant or abandoned building that is subject to this Section.

For purposes of this Section 103A.4, a building shall not be considered vacant or abandoned if:

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(1) There is a valid building permit for repair, rehabilitation, or construction of a building on the parcel and the owner is progressing diligently to completes the repair, rehabilitation, or construction within one year from the date the initial permit was issued; or

(2) The building complies with all codes, does not contribute to blight as defined in Chapter 80 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, is ready for occupancy, and is actively being offered for sale, lease, or rent.

103A.4.2. Property owner's obligation to register a vacant or abandoned building. The owner of a building defined as vacant or abandoned under Section 103A.4.1 shall register that building with the Department 30 days after it has become vacant or abandoned on a form provided by the Department. The form shall describe the methods by which the owner has secured the property against unauthorized entry, declare any future plans for the property, state whether or not there is fire and liability insurance coverage, and provide such other information as the Department may require. A registration fee shall be paid at the time of registration and annually thereafter. See Section 110A, Table IA-J for applicable fee.

103A.4.3. Notice. Whenever the Director has probable cause to believe, based upon an inspection, complaint, or report from another agency of the City and County of San Francisco or other governmental agency, that a building is vacant or abandoned and it has not been registered as required by this Section 103A.4, the Director shall serve the owner of record, as shown on the Assessor's Records, or authorized agent with a written notice requiring the owner to register the building with the Department as vacant or abandoned and pay the registration fee within the period of time specified in the notice, which shall be no greater than 30 days.

103A.4.4. Sign posting. The owner of record of the vacant or abandoned building is required to post a sign at the front of the building, in a conspicuous location protected from the weather, that provides the current name, address, and phone number of the owner of record or an authorized agent if different from the owner. If a notice of default or foreclosure has been recorded for the
property, the lender’s name, address, and telephone number must also be provided. The sign shall be no smaller than 8 l/2 inches by 11 inches.

103A.4.5. Maintenance and security requirements. The following maintenance and security requirements shall apply to a vacant or abandoned building. The Director has the discretion to modify these requirements in the case of a partially vacant building, and to modify or waive some or all of these requirements in the case of a building that has been damaged by fire, a natural disaster, or other calamity.

104A.4.5.1. Maintenance of property - exterior. The property owner shall actively maintain and monitor the exterior of the building and the grounds so that they remain in continuing compliance with all applicable codes and regulations, and do not contribute to and are not likely to contribute to blight as defined in Chapter 80 of the Administrative Code. Active maintenance and monitoring shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) Maintenance of landscaping and plant materials in good condition;

(2) Regular removal of all exterior trash, debris, and graffiti;

(3) Maintenance of the exterior of the building in a good condition that is structurally safe and preserves the physical integrity of the structure, including but not limited to paint and finishes, foundation, roof, chimneys, flues, gutters, downspouts, scuppers, flashing, skylights, windows, exterior stairs and decks;

(4) Prevention of criminal activity on the premises and trespass by unauthorized persons;

and

(5) Turning off all utilities that are not necessary for the upkeep and maintenance of the building.

103A.4.5.2. Maintenance of property – interior. The property owner shall preserve the interior of the building from damage by the elements or plumbing leaks, and keep it free from accumulation of garbage and other debris, and from infestation by rodents, insects, or other pests.
103A.4.5.3. Security. The building shall be secured against unauthorized entry. The methods of security shall be as approved by the Director, who shall take into consideration whether the property has been cited for nuisance activities or criminal conduct by another department of the City and County of San Francisco or other government agency.

103A.4.6. Insurance. The owner of record shall maintain whatever fire and liability insurance coverage the Director determines is necessary. Any insurance policy shall require notice to the Department in the event of cancellation of insurance or a reduction in coverage.

104A.4.7. Violation a public nuisance; enforcement. A property in violation of the provisions of this section is deemed to be a public nuisance and subject to enforcement by the Department and penalties under Section 102A and 103A of this Code or under other applicable sections of the San Francisco Municipal Code.

Section 3. The San Francisco Building Code is hereby amended by amending Section 110, Table 1A-J, to read as follows:

TABLE 1A-J – MISCELLANEOUS FEES

1. Central Permit Bureau Processing Fee for Miscellaneous Permits from other disciplines Standard Administrative Hourly Rate – Minimum One-Half Hour

2. Building numbers (each entrance) $210.00

3. Extension of time: application cancellation and permit expiration:
   Each application extension (in plan review) $160.00 plus 20% of All Plan Review Fees
   Each permit extension $160.00 plus 10% of all Permit Issuance Fees

4. Product approvals
   General approval – initial or reinstatement Standard Hourly Plan Review Rate –

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General approval – modification or revision

Minimum Three Hours

Standard Hourly Plan Review Rate –
Minimum Three Hours

General approval – biannual renewal

Standard Hourly Plan Review Rate –
Minimum Three Hours

5. Vacant building – initial and annual registration fee

Standard Inspection Hourly Rate –
Four and One-Half
Minimum Six Hours

Section 4. Statement of General Welfare. In undertaking the enforcement of this ordinance, the City is assuming an undertaking only to promote the general welfare. It is not assuming, or is it imposing on its officers and employees, an obligation for breach of which it is liable in money damages to any person who claims that such breach proximately caused injury.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

By:
JUDITH A. BOYAJIAN
Deputy City Attorney

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August 11, 2009 Board of Supervisors — PASSED, ON FIRST READING
Ayes: 11 - Alioto-Pier, Avalos, Campos, Chiu, Chu, Daly, Dufty, Elsbernd, Mar, Maxwell, Mirkarimi

August 18, 2009 Board of Supervisors — FINALLY PASSED
Ayes: 10 - Alioto-Pier, Avalos, Campos, Chiu, Chu, Daly, Elsbernd, Mar, Maxwell, Mirkarimi
Excused: 1 - Dufty
File No. 090554

I hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance was FINALLY PASSED on August 18, 2009 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

8.27.09
Date Approved

Mayor Gavin Newsom