



Willie L. Hines, Jr.
City of Milwaukee Common Council

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Ordinance Upgrading Vacant Building Registration Passes 15-0

A significant change to how the City of Milwaukee addresses non-compliant owners of vacant properties passed the Common Council this morning on a unanimous vote. The ordinance, File # 100639, was sponsored by Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr., who stated that the new penalties are necessary to ensure compliance and stabilize neighborhoods.

“You don’t often see a 15-0 vote on a significant piece of legislation,” said Hines. “I want to first thank my colleagues for seeing the wisdom of holding these property owners accountable. Second, the City Attorney’s Office and the Department of Neighborhood Services deserve credit for assisting me over the last several months in drafting such a meaningful improvement to the city code.”

The Tuesday vote of the Common Council followed a unanimous vote on Friday, December 17, where a packed room of resident supporters spoke to the Zoning, Neighborhood and Development Committee in support of Alderman Hines’ legislation. In addition to average citizens who came to testify, representatives from Common Ground, Walnut Way Conservation Corp., Washington Park Partners and the Northside YMCA also took time to publicly back the ordinance.

“Neighbors are tired of having to deal with these vacant buildings themselves,” added Hines. “It is emotionally draining for residents to constantly watch over dilapidated buildings in their neighborhoods, when owners ignore their responsibilities and don’t step up to the plate. Just as importantly, it’s financially draining to the city.”

The new ordinance increases financial penalties for owners who do not register their vacant buildings, and creates a new public safety fee that levies significant fines if police officers or fire fighters are called out to vacant buildings that are out of compliance.