



Abandoned Building/Vacant Lot Subcommittee

Recommendations to
Okanogan County Municipalities

MEET OUR COMMITTEE

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This committee was created to provide examples, solutions and recommendations for communities to address the following:

Identified Concern: Cities are suffering with lack of revenue due to no businesses in the vacant buildings. Sales Tax, and Utility fees are necessary for cities to operate. Public Safety and Community Vitality are impacted by long term vacant buildings & lots.

Identified Opportunity: This has provided us with an opportunity by addressing this concern, to support small businesses and entrepreneurs by providing them with a place to conduct their business. Many of these vacant buildings are within the downtown core of communities where new businesses want to be. This will support the local economy and create jobs within the communities.

This can be accomplished by:

- Helping property owners solve vacant building problems. (real estate, repair, ideas to market their business)
- List the buildings that want to sell-Economic Alliance
- Adopt a Vacant Building Registration Program which includes Window dressing Requirements:
 - Allows community support to know a building is vacant so support can happen quickly.
 - Community support can be printed security window film that protects the glass from vandalism, can have student or other art on it, and is cheaper and looks better than OSB.
 - Funding collected could be used for Facade improvement grants and or pay for City Building Inspector/Code Enforcer.
- If owner WANTS it to stay vacant provide minimum maintenance standards after registration.
- Waive fee for certain building improvements (Vacant Building Registration Fee)
- Create a Facade Improvement Program that addresses:
 - Paint, Flashing, Outside Esthetics
 - Referrals to local small business roster for registered contractors to do the work



Recommendation



Business/Landlord License Requirement

Many Cities in Okanogan County do not require a business to obtain a business license to operate within the city limits.

We recommend that all cities utilize the Department of Revenue to incorporate a annual Business License requirement in order to do business within their community including property owners who plan on leasing their property.

This is at no cost to the city and a business can do this when they renew their business at the SOS website annually.

Revenues could then be used to create a incentive program for a Façade Improvement grant program, downtown beautification, signage for the downtown area, etc.

[Example 1](#)

[Example 2](#)

[Example 3](#)

Recommendation #2

Vacant Building Registration

Throughout Okanogan County we have many vacant buildings and lots that continue to sit unoccupied, in many instances for years. We recommend that Cities implement a Vacant Building & Lot registration that would be completed as soon as building/lot is vacated. This registration would also come with fees. If a owner has numerous properties, each building/lot would be registered separately.

Example:

- Initial Registration Fee-\$250.00
- 6 Months Vacancy Fee-\$250.00
- 1 Year Vacancy Fee-\$500.00
- 1.5 Year Vacancy Fee-\$750.00
- 2 Year Vacancy Fee-\$1000.00+

Revenues could then be used to create a incentive program for a Façade Improvement grant program, downtown beautification, signage for the downtown area, and or pay for administration of the program. Fees could be waived for certain building improvements.

[Example 1](#)

[Vacancy Tax Example](#)



Recommendation # 3

Utility Fees

We recommend the Building Owner continue to pay utility fees even if the building is vacant. These fees will assist the community in the maintenance of their current infrastructure and help offset fees for building inspector/code enforcer.



Recommendation # 4

Create a Ordinance on Unfit Dwellings, Buildings and Structures

Communities find that unkempt, unsafe, unsanitary and otherwise improperly maintained premises and structures, sidewalks and easements within the city, in addition to the obvious hazards which these conditions pose to the public health, safety and welfare, adversely affect the value, utility and habitability of property within the city as a whole and specifically cause substantial damage to adjoining and nearby property. This includes storage in vacant buildings that are not zoned or classified for commercial and or personal storage use.

A property that is merely unkempt may reduce the value of adjoining property and if there are sufficient properties that are unkempt, unsightly and dangerous, that the habitability and economic well-being of the city are materially and adversely affected.

[Example 1](#)

[Example 2](#)



VACANT

Recommendation #5

Create a Empty Building Toolkit

Create a toolkit with resources for building owners to market their building

And to access small business resources who have access to potential tenants

Empty Building Toolkit!
Do you have empty buildings in your downtown that need to be filled? Follow this brochure or go to [url link](#) for tips on downtown revitalization and filling empty commercial space in your town.

What's Missing in Your Downtown?
Go to [\(Downtown Strategic Plan\)](#) for information tailored for your town. Find out which businesses are needed in your town!

Current Vacancies in Your Town!
[Click here](#) to see the full list of empty buildings in your community.

Existing Resources
NCWEDD: Northcentral Washington Economic Development District provides regional development and economic support for Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan counties and the Colville Confederated Tribes.
Economic Alliance of Okanogan County: [economic-alliance.com](#). Support for small businesses of Okanogan County.
TwispWorks: Committed to increasing the cultural and economic vitality of the Methow Valley, visit [twisp-works.org](#) for information on small business support in the Methow Valley.
Washington SBDC: a network of over 30 expert business advisors to help Washington businesses grow through advising, education & research.

Small Business Resilience Grants!
Looking for a grant to help you renovate your business, improve fire resiliency or recover from Covid-19 losses? [Click here \(link\)](#) for details on the SBEG from TwispWorks!

The problem with empty commercial buildings ...
I suspect you'll want to frame the problem this brochure helps solve on this panel?

Need financing for your business?
The Methow Investment Network is a place to pitch your business idea, gain mentors and valuable feedback, as well as capital for your business venture!

Thinking about Reinvesting in your Community?
[Click here](#) for information on the 1031 Exchange policies.

Empty Building Toolkit

BUSINESS SUPPORT
TwispWorks.org

OPEN
Welcome

THE IRON HORSE

Recommendation #6

Update City Code to require building owners to cover vacant building windows/doors in aesthetically pleasing signage and art.

Examples of language to add to code is covered in previous slides. Example Graphics below or as part of Empty Building Toolkit on previous slide.



Resources

MRSC

Article: How Vacant Buildings Affect Communities