File #: 260498, **Version:** 1

ORDINANCE NO. 260498

Sponsor: Mayor Quinton Lucas

Calling an election on August 4, 2026, for the purpose of submitting to the voters of Kansas City a question authorizing City to establish semiannual vacant property registration fees not to exceed $200.00 for chronically vacant nuisance property, $1,000.00 for vacant commercial property and $200.00 for vacant unimproved property; directing the City Clerk to notify the responsible election authorities on or before May 26, 2026; enacting the vacant property registration fees ordinance contingent upon voter approval; and recognizing this ordinance as having an accelerated effective date because it calls an election.)

WHEREAS, the City of Kansas City currently maintains a vacant property registry to identify and monitor properties within the City that are vacant and may pose risks to public health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, there are currently an estimated 12,200 privately owned vacant parcels in Kansas City; and

WHEREAS, vacant properties that are left unmanaged contribute to neighborhood deterioration, depress surrounding property values, attract criminal activity, and place disproportionate burdens on adjacent property owners and the broader community; and

WHEREAS, the City currently expends significant public resources periodically inspecting vacant properties to ensure compliance with applicable codes at a cost that is not currently reimbursed by property owners; and

WHEREAS, in May 2025, City Council passed Resolution No. 250396, which established the Vacant Land Activation Initiative ("VLAI") to develop recommendations for addressing vacancy across the City; and

WHEREAS, one recommendation from the VLAI is to develop a vacant property registration fee system with a tiered fee structure for residential with structure, residential without structure, and commercial; and

WHEREAS, expanding registration to unimproved parcels, which makes up 87% of the total vacant parcels, closes a significant gap in the current system; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a vacant property registration fee structure will encourage owners of vacant properties to return such properties to productive use; and

WHEREAS, a tiered fee structure tied to property type is designed to place a meaningful incentive on owners of larger and higher-value properties while avoiding undue financial burden on owners of smaller residential properties; and

WHEREAS, Jefferson City has an existing fee structure for vacant property registration that includes a semi-annual fee of $200 for residential structures and $1,000 for commercial structures; and

WHEREAS, other peer cities have established vacant property registries with similar fee structures, including but not limited to Cleveland and Cincinnati, OH, Warren, MI, Milwaukee, WI, and Minneapolis, MN, with Minneapolis having one of the highest annual fees of $7,228.70; and

WHEREAS, the Council finds it in the best interest of the City to call a special election on August 4, 2026 for the purpose of submitting this question to qualified voters of Kansas City; and NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KANSAS CITY:

Section 1. **ELECTION CALLED**. That an election is called on August 4, 2026 for the purpose of submitting to the voters of Kansas City the question of authorizing City to establish semiannual vacant property registration fees not to exceed $200.00 for chronically vacant nuisance properties, $1,000.00 for vacant commercial property and $200.00 for vacant unimproved property.

Section 2. **BALLOT TITLE.** The ballot title shall be:

SPECIAL ELECTION, August 4, 2026

QUESTION ____
(Vacant Property Registration Fees)

Shall the City of Kansas City be authorized to establish and impose vacant property registration fees for the owners of property in three categories, as defined by ordinance, to encourage maintenance, activation and redevelopment and to offset the City's costs of inspecting and monitoring of chronically vacant properties in the City as follows:

A semiannual fee not to exceed $200.00 for Chronically Vacant Nuisance Property;
A semiannual fee not to exceed $1,000.00 for Vacant Commercial Property; and
A semiannual fee not to exceed $200.00 for Vacant Unimproved Property;

subject to any exemptions authorized by law, including ordinance?

_____ YES _____ NO

Section 3. **NOTICE TO ELECTION AUTHORITIES BY CITY CLERK.** That following passage of this ordinance the City Clerk shall deliver certified copies of this ordinance and notice of election to the Clerk of Cass County, Board of Election Commissioners of Clay County, Board of Election Commissioners of Kansas City and Board of Election Commissioners of Platte County, on or before May 26, 2026, which shall be the authority of each election authority of the City to submit the question to the electors of Kansas City and to give public notice as provided by law.

Section 4. **NOTICE OF ELECTION**. That the notice of election shall read as follows:

NOTICE OF ELECTION
CITY OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Notice is hereby given that the City of Kansas City has called an election to be held in said City on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., at which election all qualified voters residing within Kansas City, Missouri will be given the opportunity to vote.

The official ballot will be in substantially the following form:

OFFICIAL BALLOT
CITY OF KANSAS CITY

SPECIAL ELECTION, August 4, 2026

QUESTION ____
(Vacant Property Registration Fees)

Shall the City of Kansas City be authorized to establish and impose vacant property registration fees for the owners of property in three categories, as defined by ordinance, to encourage maintenance, activation and redevelopment and to offset the city's costs of inspecting and monitoring of chronically vacant properties in the City as follows:

A semiannual fee not to exceed $200.00 for Chronically Vacant Nuisance Property;
A semiannual fee not to exceed $1,000.00 for Vacant Commercial Property; and
A semiannual fee not to exceed $200.00 for Vacant Unimproved Property;

subject to any exemptions authorized by law, including ordinance?

_____ YES _____ NO

[Instructions to voters will be supplied by the election authorities]

A full and complete copy of Ordinance No. _____ submitting this question to the electorate is on file in the Office of the City Clerk of Kansas City, Missouri, and is open for inspection and copying.

The polling places for the election will be [insert list of polling places in last publication only].

I hereby certify that the foregoing is the legal notice to be published pursuant to Section 115.127, RSMo.

Given under my hand and the official seal of the City of Kansas City, Missouri, this _____ day of _____, 2026.

(SEAL)

_____
MARILYN SANDERS
City Clerk, City of Kansas City, Missouri

Before me, a notary public, personally appeared Marilyn Sanders, to me known to be the City Clerk of

the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and the person who acknowledged to me that she executed the same for the purposes therein stated.

_____
Notary Public

My commission expires: _____

Section 5. **ENACTMENT OF VACANT PROPERTY REGISTRATION FEES.** Amending Chapter 56, Article VI, Code of Ordinances, by enacting a new Section 56-586, entitled Vacant property registration fees authorized, contingent upon the approval of the voters, to read as follows:

Sec. 56-586. Vacant property registration fees authorized.

(a) *Definitions*. For purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the meanings set forth below:

(1) *Director* means the director of the department of neighborhood services or their authorized designee.

(2) *Chronically vacant nuisance property* means any real property that has been vacant for at least six (6) months, has two or more pending violations of this code within the preceding 12 months, and is improved either by:

a. a residential building type currently identified in section 88-110-04 of this code; or

b. multiple dwelling units but does not contain a residential building type currently identified in section 88-110-04 of this code.

(3) *Semiannual* means occurring at a frequency once every six months or twice a year;

(4) *Vacant commercial property* means any vacant real property improved by a building or structure that is not currently identified as a residential building type in section 88-110-04 of this code and contains one or fewer dwelling units.

(5) *Vacant unimproved property* means any vacant real property that is not improved by any building, structure or dwelling unit.

(6) *Vacant* means a property lacking habitual presence of human beings who have a legal right to be on the property, or at which substantially all lawful business operations or residential occupancy has ceased.

(7) *Dwelling unit* means one or more rooms arranged, designed, or used as independent living quarters for a single household. Buildings with more than one kitchen or more than one set of cooking facilities are deemed to contain multiple dwelling units unless the additional cooking facilities are clearly accessory and not intended to serve additional households.

(b) *Imposition of Fees*. The director is hereby authorized to impose semiannual fees not to exceed the

following amounts upon owners of the following properties, pursuant to the procedures set forth in this code, by ordinance or as otherwise established by the director:

(1) Chronically Vacant Nuisance Property: A fee not to exceed two hundred dollars ($200.00);

(2) Vacant Commercial Property: A fee not to exceed one thousand dollars ($1,000.00); and

(3) Vacant Unimproved Property: A fee not to exceed two hundred dollars ($200.00).

The Director shall establish a fee schedule consistent with the maximum amounts authorized in this section and may adopt administrative rules to impose and enforce such fees.

(c) *Exemptions*. In addition to any exemptions mandated by law, the city may, by ordinance, establish exemptions, reductions, or waivers from any fees imposed pursuant to this section. Any such ordinance shall specify the scope, eligibility criteria, and duration of the exemption, reduction or waiver, and the director shall administer any exemptions, reductions or waivers in accordance with the terms of such ordinance.

(d) *Administrative authority*. The director may adopt rules, regulations, forms, and procedures necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

(e) *Severability*. If any provision of this section or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the section and its application to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.

Section 6. **ACCELERATED EFFECTIVE DATE RECOGNIZED**. That this ordinance is recognized as having an accelerated effective date as provided by Section 503(a)(3)(A) of the City Charter in that it calls for an election and shall take effect in accordance with that section.

Approved as to form:

Bret Kassen
Associate City Attorney

powered by Legistar™