

Property Accountability & Occupancy Compliance Initiative

Initial Common Council Discussion

Policy framework for discussion — no final program adoption or implementation action requested

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Tonight's Purpose

- Provide Council with its first detailed introduction to the initiative
- Explain the problem, the proposed framework, and the initial legal review
- Hear Council's questions, concerns, and areas of interest
- Determine whether staff should continue developing the concept in phases

No local law, fee, staffing authorization, software purchase, or implementation action is requested tonight.

Documents Before Council

Council Policy Brief

- Detailed explanation of the existing need and current operating conditions
- Long-term program framework and initial City Attorney review
- Recommended phased approach
- Staffing, technology, cost, and policy considerations

Implementation–Legal Action Matrix

- At-a-glance breakdown of individual program components
- Legal and operational status
- Likely action or legal vehicle
- Lead coordination and priority

Where the Idea Came From

- Planning and code-enforcement summits attended over the past year
- A municipal panel on rental registration and property accountability
- The former mayor of Oswego described the positive impact of Oswego's rental registry
- Other planners discussed programs already operating or under development
- Follow-up research into how municipalities structure registration, inspections, fees, staffing, and enforcement
- Comparison of those practices with issues observed firsthand in Oneida

The proposal is not copied from one municipality; it is a framework developed for Oneida.

The Problem We Are Trying to Address

- Absentee ownership and difficulty reaching responsible parties
- Neglected rental properties and recurring code violations
- Vacant and distressed buildings
- Repeated complaints and recurring public-safety activity
- Inspection backlogs and limited proactive capacity
- Property information spread across departments and systems

Important Context

- Most landlords and property owners are responsible and cooperative
- A relatively small number of properties can require a disproportionate amount of City attention
- The goal is better accountability and earlier intervention—not treating every rental as a problem

What the Initiative Could Include

Initial / Core Components

- Residential rental registration
- Improvement of the existing Vacant Building Registry
- Ownership, responsible-party, and local-contact information
- Centralized property records
- Risk-based inspection and enforcement priorities

Later Components

- Commercial property registration
- Commercial occupancy coordination
- Public compliance information or recognition
- Advanced corrective-action and enforcement tools
- Other legally sensitive components

What Residential Registration Would Do

- Identify which properties and dwelling units are being rented
- Maintain current owner, manager, responsible-party, and local-contact information
- Support inspection scheduling and emergency communication
- Create consistent registration, inspection, and compliance records
- Improve enforcement follow-up when problems arise

Registration provides the information needed for a coordinated system; it does not solve every property problem by itself.

Initial City Attorney Review

Generally Capable of Further Development

- Residential rental registration
- Ownership and responsible-party disclosure
- Commercial property registration
- Centralized property tracking
- Reasonable cost-based fees
- Phased implementation

Additional Work Required

- Detailed local-law drafting
- Objective standards and definitions
- Notice, correction, hearing, and appeal procedures
- Due-process protections
- Administrative procedures and cost analysis
- Staffing and technology planning

More Legally Sensitive Concepts

- Public property ratings or classifications
- Suspension, revocation, denial, or nonrenewal
- Chronic-noncompliance classifications
- Cross-portfolio enforcement involving affiliated ownership
- Tenant-relocation requirements
- Rent-collection or eviction-related restrictions

These items should be reserved for later phases, if pursued at all, and only after additional legal and policy review.

Why Implementation Must Be Phased

- Do not adopt a large program and figure out administration afterward
- Match the scope of implementation to staffing and funding
- Establish legal authority, procedures, and due process first
- Select and implement appropriate software and records systems
- Address existing backlogs and prepare staff
- Evaluate each phase before expanding to the next

Operational readiness—not an arbitrary deadline—should determine the pace.

Recommended Sequence



Current Capacity

Current Staffing

- Two full-time Code Enforcement Officers
- One clerical support position
- Director oversight across Planning, Development, and Codes
- Separate Fire Department commercial-inspection responsibilities

Existing Workload

- Building permits and construction inspections
- Housing inspections and property-maintenance enforcement
- Complaint response, unsafe buildings, court work, and follow-up
- Approximately six-month residential inspection backlog
- Separate commercial-inspection workload and backlog

Resources Required for Sustainable Implementation

- Up to two additional full-time Code Enforcement Officers
- At least one alternative schedule to provide later-day and Saturday coverage
- Additional full-time clerical or administrative support
- Continued evaluation of a Development Specialist
- Centralized registration and property-tracking software
- Legal drafting, training, public communication, and startup funding

One additional officer may provide minimum startup capacity; two would provide a more sustainable model.

Fees and Revenue

This should not be viewed as a quick revenue-generating program or a silver bullet for the City budget.

- Any registration fee must be reasonably related to the actual cost of operating the program
- A documented cost analysis must include staffing, software, notices, records, enforcement, and legal support
- No defensible fee recommendation or reliable revenue projection exists yet
- Registration fees should remain distinct from inspection and follow-up inspection fees

What Council Is—and Is Not—Being Asked to Do

Not Requested Tonight

- No local law
- No fee authorization
- No staffing approval
- No software purchase
- No implementation date
- No final enforcement system

Direction Requested

- Should staff continue developing the concept?
- Which elements have value?
- Which elements raise concerns?
- What should be prioritized, changed, or removed?
- Return to Council before any final action

Closing

This is not a quick fix, and it is not a silver bullet.

- It will require time, careful legal development, staffing, technology, funding, and public communication
- It will not solve every housing, property-maintenance, or neighborhood problem
- It could provide better ownership information, earlier intervention, stronger accountability, safer housing, and more effective use of City resources
- Responsible landlords should benefit from a clear, consistent, and predictable process

Tonight is the beginning of the conversation.