



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

VACANT STOREFRONT POLICY

I. Overview

The City of Cambridge's ("City") is fortunate to have a robust local economy that extends to its retail, personal services, and restaurant sectors. However, even temporary storefront vacancies through normal turnover can have a negative impact on the perception of a commercial corridor's vitality and quality of the consumer shopping experience. The purpose of this Vacant Storefront Policy ("Policy") is to preserve street level activity, protect property values, maintain neighborhood integrity and accessibility, safeguard against economic property blight, and ensure the safe and sanitary maintenance of ground floor vacant properties.

II. Scope

This Policy applies to ground floor vacant storefronts within the City where the property owner has not had a lease with a tenant for at least one hundred eighty (180) consecutive days, or the ground floor storefronts have otherwise been vacant for a period of at least one hundred eighty (180) consecutive days. This Policy also applies to ground floor storefronts that have been vacant for at least one hundred eighty (180) consecutive days where the property owner has executed a lease with a tenant, but the property is undergoing renovations to accommodate the tenant's use of the property.

III. Requirements

After one hundred eighty days (180) consecutive days of vacancy, the property shall do the following:

If the space is not leased and remains vacant, or is otherwise vacant but not undergoing renovations, the property owner must do one or both of the following:

Post leasing contact information in the storefront window(s) so that it is visible to a prospective tenant;

Put up artwork or similar activation for purposes of covering storefront window(s) that face a public way so that no less than ten percent (10%) of the storefront window(s) is covered, and post leasing contact information in the storefront window(s) so that it is visible to a prospective tenant.

If the ground floor space is leased, but undergoing renovations, the property owner shall:



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1. Place a “coming soon” sign with information about the new tenant. The tenant and the owner must make sure that this sign complies with the Cambridge Sign Ordinance, Article 7.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance¹.

Please see Appendix A for pictorial examples of complying with the above requirements.

IV. Safe and Sanitary Maintenance

All commercial property owners must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations. For vacant storefronts, the applicable laws, rules and regulations include:

- A. Cambridge Municipal Code Chapter 12.16, Section 12.16.110 – Sidewalks – Requires snow and ice removal
- B. Cambridge Municipal Code Chapter 8.24, Section 8.24.040 – Private property owners and occupants – Requires keeping premises and adjacent areas free of litter
- C. General Laws c.143, §§6-12 – Requires that structures be kept safe and secure
- D. Massachusetts Building Code, which incorporates the International Building Code – Requires that vacant structures must be secured against unauthorized entry
- E. Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code, which incorporates the International Fire Code, Section 110 – Requires that vacant structures must be secured against unauthorized entry

Approved by: 
Yi-An Huang (Jun 3, 2025 08:53 EDT)

Yi-An Huang

City Manager

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¹ For more information on sign permits and the sign regulations, visit:
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/zoninganddevelopment/Signs>