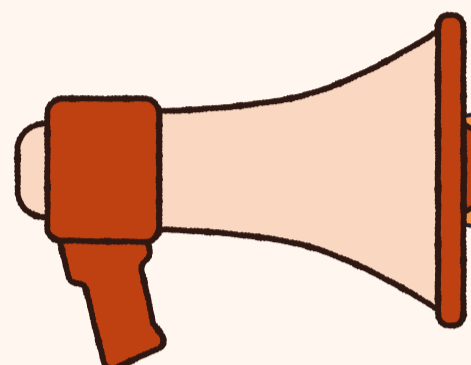


Following the Fire: Syracuse Vacant Property Fire Crisis



THE PROBLEM

- Vacant and abandoned buildings and lots are visible signs of neighborhood decline.
- These properties are dangerous, unsightly, and increasingly catching fire.
- 76% of these vacant-property fires were in unsecured buildings.



30%

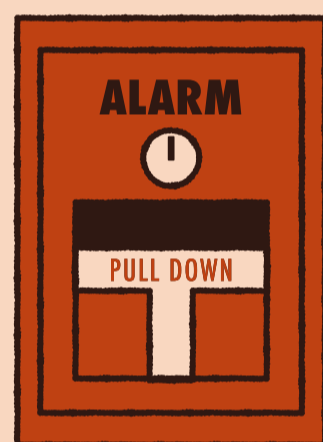
In 2024, nearly 30% (25 of 87) of all structure fires were in vacant properties.

KEY FINDINGS



MANY PROPERTIES HAD...

- Unpaid water charges and/or property taxes
- Inactive water service (often for decades)
- Open code violations
- Legal actions from the Bureau of Administrative Adjudication
- No registration on the Vacant Property Registry



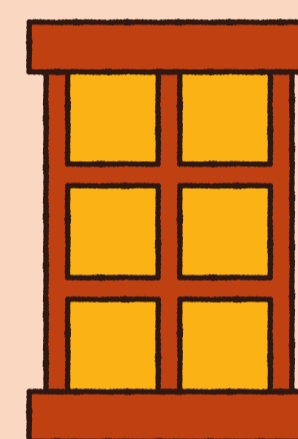
VACANT PROPERTY FIRES ON AVERAGE:

- Involved 49 fire personnel
- Took 3.5 hours to clear
- Had \$10,000 in potential reimbursable costs
- Caused \$1.12 million in estimated cumulative damages



DEMOLITIONS

- 11 of 25 vacant-property fires resulted in demolitions
- City spent \$160,000 on emergency demolitions
- Caused \$130,000 demo to land bank



SYSTEMIC ISSUES & ENFORCEMENT GAPS

- City uses multiple disconnected software systems
- No automatic data sharing between systems; manual entry leads to data gaps
- SFD failed to notify Code Enforcement after some fires
- Neighboring properties remain at risk

RECOMMENDATIONS



Early Warning System

Flag at-risk properties for early intervention before they become fire hazards.



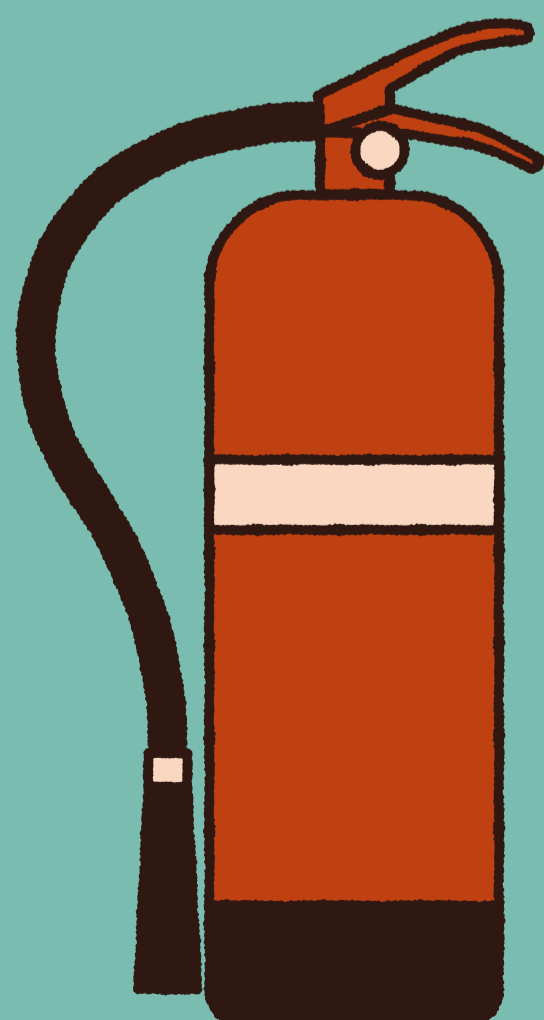
City Code Updates

Require Vacant Property Certificates, create a "Blighted" category, and adopt FEMA's "Brace and Bolt" boarding method.



Vacant Property Tax

Add a higher tax rate for vacant/abandoned buildings; fund demolitions or the Land Bank.



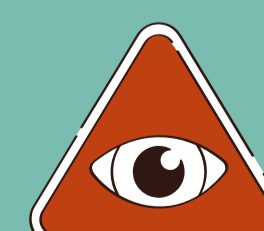
Mark Dangerous Buildings

Replace "Unfit" signs with FEMA "Red X" placards to warn firefighters and neighbors.



Professionalize Code Enforcement

Use uniforms, body cameras, and marked vehicles to build trust and accountability.



Tougher Enforcement & Data Sharing

Use rent holds until compliance is proven, inspect after fires/shutoffs, and require utility companies to notify the City.