

ORDER OF CITY COUNCILOR MATT O'MALLEY Campbell
Pressley, Janey, Edwards, Baker, Essaibi-George, Flynn, Janey, McCarthy, Pressley, Wu, Zakin and Flaherty

WHEREAS: The success of Boston's booming real estate market, linked to Boston's growing success as an economically vibrant city and an attractive place to live, has nevertheless contributes to small businesses and residents facing higher rents; and

WHEREAS: The displacement of neighborhood anchor small businesses, replaced by empty storefronts, is a phenomenon linked to the overall lack of affordability of residential and commercial space; and

WHEREAS: Cities across the United States have begun to experience "high-end blight," in which high commercial rents cause vacant storefronts in otherwise vibrant neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS: The growth in the number of residential units in large, luxury buildings over 50,000 square feet that are purchased for investment and left empty, or only occasionally inhabited, has challenged the City's efforts to house a growing population and create vibrant neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS: Data from the US Census and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council indicate that new construction to relieve Boston's housing crunch has been partially counteracted by increasing vacancy; and

WHEREAS: The City of Boston has implemented many initiatives aimed at increasing the affordability of commercial and residential space ranging from zoning reform to subsidies, but has not explored disincentives such as fees levied on long-term vacant properties; and

WHEREAS: The City's problem properties management system continues to be improved, but currently provides only limited incentives to reduce vacancy rates and does not address or have data collection capacity on the issue of higher-end vacancy; and

WHEREAS: Cities including Washington DC, New York, San Francisco, Paris, and Vancouver have explored or implemented a variety of financial disincentives to keeping residential or commercial property vacant; and

WHEREAS: Many Bostonians can name properties on their main streets and in their neighborhoods that have been vacant for years or even decades, creating holes in the fabric of the community; and

WHEREAS: Storefronts left vacant for multiple years suggest a market failure, empty residential units remove housing that could otherwise provide homes, and filling vacant space improves the vibrancy and livelihood of our city while placing downward pressure on rents; **THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: The Boston City Council, hereby assembled, orders a hearing on vacancy data collection and incentives to reduce vacancy of commercial or residential properties. The Department of Neighborhood Development, Office of Housing Stability, Office of Economic Development, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston's main streets districts, small business owners, and all other interested parties are invited to attend.

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