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Elmwood Park Board approves vacant building ordinance

Property owners will have a better understanding of their responsibilities

ELMWOOD PARK, IL - The Elmwood Park Village Board Monday approved a new vacant buildings ordinance. All property owners with vacant buildings will be required to register their buildings with the Village and take steps to keep the property from falling into disrepair.

"The ordinance requires owners to maintain their properties in a clean, safe and secure condition even while those homes or buildings remain vacant," Village Manager Paul Volpe explained. "Like most communities today, we have a problem with vacant buildings, but this ordinance helps us to address these problems more effectively."

Vacant properties that are not maintained can become an eyesore for the neighborhood as well as a health and safety hazard. Under the new ordinance, the property owner must allow the Village to inspect both inside and outside of the premises to make sure they have met all code requirements.

"If we have to take steps to cut the grass and clear weeds and debris, we will charge it back to the property owner," Volpe said. "But this is not about the Village trying to collect fines or fees. We want property owners to take the necessary steps on their own."

Village Trustees passed the ordinance on the heels of the Village's new "Keeping Elmwood Park Clean, Safe and Beautiful" campaign, designed to encourage all homeowners to do their part to keep the grass mowed, the garbage contained and their alleys free from debris.

"This is another step we are taking to keep our village clean, safe and beautiful." Village President Peter Silvestri said. "There's no need for the rest of the community to suffer because a few property owners have not taken the very basic steps to maintain their buildings."

Vacant properties have become a greater concern in recent years, as more and more homes have gone into foreclosure in the wake of the recession. In many cases, banks have taken possession of the properties while trying to find new buyers, but the process can drag on for several months, if not years.

"We feel this ordinance will help us to protect our community and the majority of our residents who take great pride in their homes," Silvestri said.