

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-O-851

AMENDING CHAPTER 18, ARTICLE V, OF THE CITY OF LAREDO CODE OF ORDINANCES TO CHANGE THE TITLE OF ARTICLE V TO “CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY,” TO ESTABLISH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ISSUANCE, MAINTENANCE, AND HISTORICAL RECORD KEEPING OF CERTIFICATES OF OCCUPANCY WITHIN THE CITY OF LAREDO; AND ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING MISSING CERTIFICATES OF OCCUPANCY FOR LONG-STANDING BUSINESS AND PROPERTIES TO ENSURE REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AND PUBLIC SAFETY WHILE MINIMIZING UNDUE BURDENS ON PROPERTY OWNERS; AND ADDING SECTION 18-27 ENTITLED “RECORD KEEPING AND REINSTATEMENT PROCESS;” PROVIDING THAT THE ORDINANCE SHALL BE CUMULATIVE, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY CLAUSE, AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION AND EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Laredo Code of Ordinances regulates and requires all businesses to have a certificate of occupancy to conduct business within the City of Laredo; and,

WHEREAS, the City will establish policies and procedures for the issuance, maintenance, and historical recordkeeping of certificates of occupancy within the City of Laredo; and,

WHEREAS, the City will establish a framework for addressing missing certificates of occupancy for long-standing businesses and properties to ensure regulatory compliance and public safety while minimizing undue burdens on property owners; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Laredo, in order to assist property owners and/or business owners, deems it necessary to establish an archival system for the purpose of safeguarding and indexing current and legacy Certificates of Occupancy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAREDO THAT:

Section 1. The City of Laredo Code of Ordinances, Chapter 18, Article V is hereby amended as follows:

ARTICLE V. — ~~REGULATION FOR NEW BUSINESS REGISTRATION~~ CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

Sec. 18-27 Record keeping and reinstatement process

(1) Record Keeping of Certificates of Occupancy:

- a. The City shall create and maintain a digital “Building Master Record” in order to maintain, index, and safeguard all Certificates of Occupancy (COs) issued, ensuring

accessibility and historical preservation in compliance with Title 13 Texas Administrative Code § 7.125.

(2) Certificates of Occupancy Reinstatement Process:

- a. Property owners and/or business owners who have misplaced their Certificate of Occupancy, or for which no records exist with the City of Laredo, the following shall apply:
 - i) Property owners must submit a notarized affidavit in a form provided by the City of Laredo attesting that the structure and/or business has been continuously occupied and or in operation since August 2, 1983.
 - ii) Should the structure and/or business be located within a tract of land annexed by the City of Laredo after August 2, 1983, property owner must submit a notarized affidavit in a form provided by the City of Laredo attesting that the structure and/or business has been continuously occupied and or in operation prior to the date of annexation.
 - iii) Property owner must provide proof of historical occupancy through the following support documentation including but not limited to:
 - (1) Utility bills from the City of Laredo Water Utilities Department evidencing long-term service at the site;
 - (2) Property tax records/appraisal cards from the Webb County Appraisal District evidencing consistent use;
 - (3) Lease agreements, mortgage records, or state-issued business licenses;
 - (4) Other governmental documentation demonstrating historical use.
 - iv) Issuance of an Amnesty Certificate of Occupancy:
 - (1) If all requirements are met, the City may issue an Amnesty Certificate of Occupancy documenting the legal use of the structure.
 - (2) The CO shall be entered in the City's "Building Master Record."

(3) Compliance with Historical and Current Building Codes:

- a. Buildings legally constructed under previous codes shall remain compliant with the standards in place at the time of construction unless modifications trigger compliance with current codes.
- b. If the use of a building changes, the property must comply with the current building codes applicable to the new use.
- c. Major renovations, structural changes, or expansions will require compliance with the current existing building code in the affected areas.

- d. In the event that the building fails to meet compliance standards, an initial inspection will be carried out by the Building Division and the Fire Department. A written report detailing the necessary actions to achieve compliance with building codes will be issued. All required building permits must be secured prior to commencing the work, which is to be completed within 90 days unless an extension is granted. Final inspections will be performed to verify compliance.

(4) Enforcement and Compliance:

- a. Any property found to be operating without a valid CO and without sufficient proof of historical occupancy shall be required to apply for a new CO in accordance with current codes and City regulations.
- b. Failure to comply with this article may result in enforcement actions in accordance with City regulations.

(5) Implementation and Review:

- a. The Building Development Services Division shall oversee the implementation of this article.
- b. The policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with state regulations and best practices.

Section 2. This ordinance shall be cumulative of all provisions of ordinances of the City of Laredo, Texas, except where the provisions of this ordinance are in direct conflict with the provisions of such ordinances, in which event the conflicting provisions of such ordinances are hereby repealed.

Section 3. It is hereby declared to be the intention of the City Council that the phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and sections of this ordinance are severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph or section of this ordinance shall be declared unconstitutional by the valid judgment or decree of any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality shall not affect any of the remaining phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and sections of this ordinance, since the same would have been enacted by the City Council without the incorporation in this ordinance of any such unconstitutional phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph or section.

Section 4. The City Secretary of the City of Laredo is hereby directed to publish the proposed Ordinance as required by Section 2.09 of the Charter of the City of Laredo.

Section 5. This Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon passage.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL AND APPROVED BY THE MAYOR ON THIS THE
_____ DAY OF _____, 2025.

DR. VICTOR D. TREVINO
MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARIO MALDONADO, JR.
CITY SECRETARY

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

DOANH “ZONE” T. NGUYEN
CITY ATTORNEY