

COORDINATED SAFETY RESPONSE TEAM UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through report CPS2017-0282 Administration committed to review the Coordinated Safety Response Team (CSRT) mandate and Terms of Reference. As part of Council's discussion of the report on 2017 April 24, Administration committed to reporting back on the CSRT review. In the interest of addressing this commitment in a timely fashion, the amended Terms of Reference is being brought forward through this report. As Building Regulations is the lead agency of CSRT, this report on the results of the review of the CSRT mandate is being delivered to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development. The report acknowledges that improvements can be made in the way information is shared between agencies. In addition, establishing clear protocols on what information can be shared will help ensure the right agency is involved at the right time, improving how problem properties are managed as a whole. The CSRT continues to focus on keeping the complaint process simple for the public to access in an effort to ensure citizens are heard when concerns are raised. The revised Terms of Reference provided (Attachment 1) reflects enhanced information sharing and collaboration among agencies for occupied problem properties causing an unsafe condition in the community.

The broadened CSRT mandate and Terms of Reference were prepared collaboratively and approved by all member agencies of the CSRT.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Planning and Urban Development recommends that Council receive this report and attachments for information.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2017 JUNE 14:

That Council approve the Administration Recommendation contained in Report PUD2017-0486.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At the 2017 February 13 Combined Meeting of Council, a Motion Arising was Moved by Councillor Pootmans, Seconded by Councillor Farrell, that with respect to Report CPC2017-049, Council direct Administration to undertake a scoping report for a review of current challenges to the successful enforcement of the Community Standards Bylaw with specific attention to problem properties where multiple or recurring issues remain unresolved. This would include an assessment of current enforcement practices and tools, resource allocation and the functional relationship between Community Standards and 311.

In response, Calgary Community Standards delivered report CPS2017-0282, which was discussed at the 2017 April 05 meeting of the SPC on Community and Protective Services, and during the 2017 April 24 Regular meeting of Council. Although there was no specific Council direction to report back, Administration committed to reviewing the Terms of Reference of the CSRT and, if changes were required, present those amendments to Council.

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BACKGROUND

On 2017 February 13, multiple Land Use Amendment applications for secondary suites from the same owner were noted by a member of the public to be the subject of multiple Community Standards Bylaw complaints. Council responded by directing Administration and the applicant to establish mutually acceptable standards for upkeep of the properties; tabling all nine of the applications to the June Combined Meeting of Council. To address this direction, a report will be presented at the 2017 June 12 Combined Meeting of Council, making clear the educational and proactive approach to managing nuisance issues that has been taken with the applicant.

Additionally, at the 2017 February 13 meeting of Council, Administration received a motion arising providing direction to review its approach to enforcing the Community Standards Bylaw. Administration was directed to undertake a scoping report for a review of current challenges to the successful enforcement of the Community Standards Bylaw with specific attention to problem properties where multiple or recurring issues remain unresolved. This would include an assessment of current enforcement practices and tools, resource allocation and the functional relationship between Community Standards and 311. Through this scoping exercise provided to Council through CPS2017-0282 on 2017 April 24, Administration identified opportunities to expand the CSRT process to enable the committee's mandate to include occupied problem properties and address citizen concerns by strengthening the existing collaborative approach.

The focus and original mandate of CSRT was on vacant/abandoned properties because they attract vagrants, criminal activity, can become the site of fires, mould growth, and vermin infestation. Complaints on occupied properties tend to be more focused on nuisance behaviour and are typically well managed by Calgary Community Standards. However, as occupied properties move along the spectrum from nuisance to problem property, it is clear that a more collaborative and proactive approach on managing issues is required. The CSRT's viewpoint is from the perspective of the issues that are causing the citizen concern, and the impact the issues are having on the surrounding community. The success of the CSRT lies in the multi-agency approach that can be taken to issues crossing jurisdictional lines.

The following example illustrates the need for an enhanced collaboration on problem properties. On 2017 February 22 – 23, there were two fire incidents within 24 hours at a vacant derelict house on McDougall RD NE which resulted in structural damage and presented a hazard to the public. Once the CSRT was notified of the incidents the owner was immediately ordered to repair or demolish the house, secure the site with fencing, and provide security personnel to restrict public access. An application for a demolition permit was submitted by the owner on 2017 February 24. Although the occupants of the property were creating a nuisance for the neighbours for some time, the property itself was not considered derelict and was not flagged for the CSRT since its mandate is to deal with vacant/derelict and marijuana grow-op properties only. In this example, a nuisance property accelerated along the problem property spectrum to what has now become an unsafe property. The intent of coordinating the sharing of information and team approach to enforcement is to intervene on properties before they reach the crisis stage.

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Administration acknowledges that, historically, agencies using different complaint data information had not been proactively shared because of privacy concerns. There is a general agreement among CSRT agencies that a more collaborative approach is required to effectively and proactively identify potential problem properties to manage issues whether they are occupied or vacant. As all member agencies of the CSRT considered the request by Council for the CSRT to review its Terms of Reference to include occupied problem properties causing an unsafe condition in the community as being timely and appropriate.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The initial members of the CSRT include Calgary Building Services – Safety Response Unit, the Calgary Police Service, Alberta Health Services, Calgary Community Standards, Alberta Law Enforcement Teams and the Alberta Sheriffs Branch (Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods unit). Since its inception in 2011, the CSRT has worked together to improve community safety by performing investigations targeted on derelict properties, dismantled Marijuana Grow Operations and properties used illegally by vagrants.

Administration has reviewed the Terms of Reference. The conclusion of the review was that there is a need to enhance the information and data sharing between City and external agencies so that issues involving problem properties can be triaged more effectively. Further, the review also identified an opportunity to expand the member agencies of the CSRT so that, along with more complete information, the right agency could get involved at the right time. The most recent draft of the Terms of Reference (Attachment 1) has been approved by all CSRT internal and external agencies.

One basis for the Terms of Reference review was to evaluate whether the triaging system between City departments sufficiently enabled Administration to respond to citizen needs and changing circumstances. To ensure the coordination of efforts is as efficient as possible, the Terms of Reference will be managed on an evolving basis. This will allow the CSRT to better address any changes in citizen needs.

The Coordinated Safety Response Team - Terms of Reference Changes (Attachment 2) provides a detailed summary of the changes between the 2011 and 2017 versions. A high level summary of changes to the Terms of Reference can be found below:

- Expanded member agencies to include Calgary Fire Department and ENMAX Corporation, with the flexibility to consult or include other agencies not listed;
- Updated background information stating that the CSRT mandate includes occupied problem properties causing an unsafe condition in the community;
- Statement that CSRT facilitates information sharing across agencies and other safety programs;
- Broadened mandate to also include creating community connections to enable opportunities to educate property owners and the community at large on the importance of maintaining minimum property standards;
- The chair of CSRT will be reviewed annually; and
- Clarified requirement that each agency or business unit is responsible to provide data analysis to assist in meeting the objectives of the CSRT mandate

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Since the identification of potential problem properties is done through both internal and external sources, CSRT will need to establish protocols on how and when information is shared and a triage process to establish a lead agency based on the specific circumstances. Private citizens are noted as providing early recognition of problem properties. Complaints are received by agencies through multiple channels. These include, but are not limited to: field observations, 911, 311, Planning & Development Call Centre, Councillors' Offices, or directly to individuals in Administration.

Complaints are currently dealt with by the agency mandated to address a particular issue. When properties are subject to multiple complaints, this may indicate a situation that requires officers to move from an educational and compliance approach to corrective action enforcement. Sharing information and data across the CSRT agencies will more readily identify problem sites to be properly triaged. The most problematic sites that have a history with one or more agencies can then be addressed using a collaborative approach in an effort to help improve outcomes for the community.

It is important to note that the CSRT remains an advisory only and that the jurisdiction and legislated mandate of each partner agency shall still prevail. The member agencies will enhance the intake and triage of identified properties and then will provide direction on sites that should be reviewed further.

Administration is working to improve communication between business units to ensure that important property related information is shared in order to address community concerns effectively. Administration is also working to improve how citizens access enforcement services and to ensure citizens feel that their voice is heard.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The CSRT is built on a model of collaboration. The broadened mandate and amended Terms of Reference has received support from each member agency of the CSRT.

Strategic Alignment

The broadened mandate of the CSRT aligns with Council's priorities:

A City of Inspiring Neighbourhoods

- N1 - Keep communities safe by meeting and maintaining standards for crime prevention, fire response and enforcement.
- N11 - Promote public safety through education, prevention and partnerships.
- N12 - Promote and strengthen community standards through facilitated compliance.

A Well-Run City

- W5 - Regularly collaborate and engage citizens to encourage participation in City decision-making, and better communicate the reasons for the decisions.
- W7 - Continue to transform the organization to be more citizen-focused in its approach and delivery of service

Policy 2.2.5 of the Municipal Development Policy "Strong residential neighbourhoods"

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The objective of this policy is to reinforce the stability of Calgary's neighbourhoods and ensure housing quality and vitality of its residential areas.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

The approach taken by the CSRT to better protect citizens from the issues presented by problem properties encourages safe, livable communities and promotes good neighbour relationships.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

It is anticipated that the expansion of the CSRT scope to include occupied problem properties causing an unsafe condition in the community will have no effect on current or future operating budgets.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There is no impact on current or future capital budgets.

Risk Assessment

If the focus of the CSRT shifts too much towards dealing with nuisance properties there is a risk that the ability to address issues caused by the highest impact problem properties will be negatively impacted. This risk will be mitigated by developing a risk matrix which would include evaluating property issues based on relative citizen and community impacts, and in turn whether a single or multiple agency response is needed. This will clarify which agency deals with each particular issue and ensure the right agency member(s) is involved at the right time.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The expansion of CSRT's membership and scope to include occupied problem properties causing an unsafe condition in the community will help Administration address ongoing issues caused by repeat offenders of one or more regulations. Future operational improvements that require an update to the Terms of Reference will not require Council consideration. The proposed amendments to the CSRT Terms of Reference are supported by all CSRT members.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Coordinated Safety Response Team Terms of Reference
2. Coordinated Safety Response Team - Terms of Reference Changes