

Collaborating to Support Residents and Address Problem Properties

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Community Development Committee recommend that Council:

1. Give three readings to the proposed Community Standards Bylaw (Attachment 2) to replace the Community Standards Bylaw 5M2004 to improve efficiencies in enforcement;
2. Endorse the advocacy positions as outlined in Attachment 4; and
3. Direct that a budget request to expand the Coordinated Safety Response Team as outlined in this report be considered as part of the Adjustments to the service plans and budgets in 2023 November and be included in the Standing Executive Committee Item – Strategic Discussion on Building and Delivering on Plans and Budgets.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, 2023 MAY 31:

That Council:

1. Give three readings to the **Proposed Bylaw 32M2023** the Community Standards Bylaw (Attachment 2) to replace the Community Standards Bylaw 5M2004 to improve efficiencies in enforcement;
2. Endorse the advocacy positions as outlined in Attachment 4;
3. Direct that a budget request to expand the Coordinated Safety Response Team as outlined in this report be considered as part of the Adjustments to the service plans and budgets in 2023 November and be included in the Standing Executive Committee Item – Strategic Discussion on Building and Delivering on Plans and Budgets; and
4. Direct that Attachment 7 be held confidential pursuant to Section 17 (Disclosure harmful to personal privacy) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Excerpt from the Minutes of the 2023 May 31 Regular Meeting of the Community Development Committee:

“The following documents were distributed with respect to Report CD2023-0391:

- A revised presentation entitled "Collaborating to Support Residents and Address Problem Properties", and
- A Notice of Motion entitled "Problem Properties".”

HIGHLIGHTS

- Administration has identified bylaw amendments, advocacy approaches, and operational changes to more effectively address concerns related to problem properties.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** The proposed changes proactively address many of the root causes of property-related concerns such as the potential for increased support, education, and enforcement capacity to address issues such as unsafe properties, ongoing construction delays, hoarding situations, and more.

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- **Why does it matter?** With fewer problem properties, there will be improvements to community safety, livability, and community revitalization.
- If approved, the revised bylaw will improve response to problem properties by giving community peace officers tools to enforce certain issues quicker and reduce the number of calls to 311 from concerned community members.
- The advocacy positions provide clarity when working with other orders of government to advance improvements to legislation and funding that will progress the way The City enforces issues and connects people living in problem properties to supports.
- Issues that occur at problem properties cannot be addressed solely through legislative enhancements; they also require a multi-faceted approach to address root causes that may include absentee landlords, mental health challenges, social disorder, and more.
- To fundamentally change how problem properties are addressed at an operational level, an investment is required to expand the current Coordinated Safety Response Team.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Problem properties present highly complex situations and require enhanced enforcement tools and a broader and more coordinated approach of partners and social supports to address the range of issues and situations that arise.

Through investigation Administration has identified a number of features that can indicate a problem property – a residential or commercial land or building whether vacant, occupied, or managed. These features include:

- A property in a state of neglect or disrepair,
- A property with reoccurring or compounding violations relating to safety codes, fire risks, bylaw violations or provincial health standards,
- A property with excessive storage of materials or belongings associated with hoarding,
- Construction that contravenes best practices or is perpetually unfinished, or
- A residential site being used for non-residential purposes that have a detrimental impact on public health, social, safety, and community issues.

A suite of tools and an operational structure currently exists to address property related concerns including City bylaws, provincial and federal legislation and regulation, and a Council-directed and City-led Coordinated Safety Response Team for abandoned and derelict properties.

The following improvements have been identified through assessment of both the suite of tools and current operational structure.

Updating the Community Standards Bylaw

Proposed bylaw improvements (Attachment 2) increase Administration's ability to address complex property related situations by providing community peace officers with more flexibility to deal with unique challenges where there were previously barriers, bringing efficiencies to service delivery, removing redundancy in the bylaw, and providing general housekeeping amendments to help citizens understand bylaw requirements.

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Attachment 3 provides a summary of proposed changes to the Community Standards Bylaw. If the proposed bylaw amendments are approved, bylaw changes will be operationalized by 2023 Q3 once community peace officer training is complete.

Advocating to Provincial and Federal Government

Administration has identified multiple avenues for advocacy including adopting new and more efficient ways of serving tickets, modifying the cannabis for medical purposes application intake processes to prevent large cannabis grow-ops in residential communities, improving land title processing turnaround times, increasing available grant funding for property owners with mental health concerns, improving senior's home maintenance supports, and more.

As noted in Attachment 4, two advocacy positions will direct this future work:

1. Advocate to the province and appropriate partners to increase and improve a variety of funding mechanisms for prevention of and support for those living in a problem property.
2. Advocate to the appropriate order of government and partners to address legislative barriers impacting The City's ability to address problem properties.

If Council endorses the advocacy positions, Administration will continue to explore appropriate advocacy approaches following the provincial election.

Expanding and Improving the Coordinated Safety Response Team

In 2011, the Coordinated Safety Response Team was developed to address vacant and derelict properties. The team has been successful with 106 properties being demolished over the last four years, seeing improvements to community safety and revitalization. Expanding this model will enhance Administration's ability to address other types of property concerns beyond vacant and derelict buildings.

Building on the successes of the Coordinated Safety Response Team by expanding and replicating this model will fundamentally change how problem properties are addressed at an operational level. Adding more situation response teams with specific subject matter experts will allow for a multi-lens and cross-sector approach in the following areas:

- Vacant and abandoned properties
- Unsafe residential rental housing
- Poor infill construction practices
- Residential business impacting surrounding properties
- Residential isolation and hoarding

Resourcing the expanded Coordinated Safety Response Team as illustrated in Attachment 5 can be partially accomplished within current budget allotments, but some positions will require new investment to establish. Implementation of the expanded, proactive, and collaborative structure can begin 2024 Q1 with a fully operational structure dependent on budget investment being approved.

Derelict Sub-Class Investigation

Administration investigated the ability to define and identify 'derelict properties' that could be taxed at varying rates. While current legislation in Alberta makes this possible, it is heavily constrained by legislative and regulatory requirements and would require significant capital

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investment to do so. Administration is not confident that the potential benefits of such a program would outweigh the costs. Administration will continue to monitor this option.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Public engagement was undertaken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Public/interested parties were informed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public communication or engagement was not required |

Engaging Partners: To ensure a multi-lens and cross-sector perspective on bylaw improvements, advocacy focus areas, and expanding the Coordinated Safety Response Team structure, numerous social serving agencies were consulted.

Engaging Community: To understand the impacts of problem properties from the community perspective, Administration engaged neighbours, business owners, and service providers about their experiences regarding problematic or complex properties in their communities.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Problem properties may be complex to address due to social issues including those living in isolation who may be challenged to maintain or repair their homes, and people in need of mental health supports including those living with hoarding disorder or on the hoarding spectrum. By providing additional supports the impact of the social issues can be reduced.

Environmental

There are often environmental concerns with problem properties, particularly related to accumulated materials. This can cause sanitary and safety concerns for the occupant and neighbours.

Economic

Problem properties can often affect the perceived value of surrounding businesses and properties due to their unsightly conditions and the negative spillover effects. They also require extensive resources for response, affecting operations and the ability for The City and community partners to respond to other high priority safety concerns.

Service and Financial Implications

Other: New operating funding request, new capital funding request

Direct that the budget request to establish an expanded Coordinated Safety Response Team be considered as part of the Adjustments to the service plans and budgets in 2023 November and be included in the Standing Executive Committee Item – Strategic Discussion on Building and Delivering on Plans and Budgets.

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RISK

Addressing problem properties is complex. Each may require a unique approach and multiple interventions including access to social supports, a variety of enforcement tools, and multi-partner collaboration. Through re-allocated savings, Administration can fund some new positions that will improve the way problem properties are currently addressed. However, without new investment, a fully coordinated and proactive structure cannot be implemented.

While Administration has identified numerous opportunities for advocacy to the provincial and other orders of government, it does not guarantee success in effecting change to certain legislation and funding where barriers limit supports to people in need and to address property related concerns. Administration will continue to work strategically with partners and connect with the appropriate orders of governments to improve outcomes.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. **Proposed Bylaw 32M2023**
3. Summary of Proposed Changes to the Community Standards Bylaw
4. Problem Properties Advocacy Positions
5. Expanded Coordinated Safety Response Team Structure
6. Presentation
7. CONFIDENTIAL Public Submission
8. **Notice of Motion**
9. **Revised Presentation**

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Jill Floen	Law and Legislative Services	Consult
Carla Male	Corporate Planning & Finance Services	Consult
Stuart Dalgleish	Planning and Development Services	Inform
Chief Steve Dongworth	Community Services	Inform
Doug Morgan	Operational Services	Inform
Chris Arthurs	People, Innovation and Collaboration	Inform