

## COMMON COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	2023-255
Report Date	November 22, 2023
Meeting Date	November 27, 2023
Service Area	Growth and Community Services

Her Worship Mayor Donna Noade Reardon and Members of Common Council

***SUBJECT: Increasing Resources for By-law Enforcement of the Community Standards Program***

***AUTHORIZATION***

Primary Author	Acting Commissioner	Chief Administrative Officer	Chair of Growth Committee
<b><i>P. Bentley/ B. Purinton</i></b>	<b><i>Amy Poffenroth</i></b>	<b><i>J. Brent McGovern</i></b>	<b><i>Deputy Mayor John MacKenzie</i></b>

***RECOMMENDATION***

Growth Committee Recommends that Common Council approve an expenditure of \$180,000 from the Community Services Reserve for resources associated with an up to 24-month expansion of the Community Standards Program as outlined in this report.

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

During Common Council’s General Operating Budget discussion on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, multiple Councillors highlighted the need for additional by-law enforcement officers that enforce standards within our City. The Community Standards Program is operated by one by-law enforcement officer who works to achieve these goals. Since 2022, the program has experienced a significant caseload increase and would greatly benefit from additional resources.

In response to Council’s interest to increase enforcement of community standards, staff is recommending the hiring of an additional by-law enforcement officer for up to 24 months. The new officer would allow the program to respond to Council’s desire to ensure that by-law standards are being met, but also respond to the increased number of complaints received for unsightly premises and zoning infractions. Increasing staff for the program would improve neighbourhood aesthetics and standards in alignment with Council priorities and the 10-year strategic plan.

***PREVIOUS RESOLUTION***

N/A

### **REPORT**

The Community Standards Program focuses on issues that impact the aesthetics, enjoyment, and pride of a neighbourhood. The program works to address unsightly premises, zoning by-law issues, and general upkeep of properties. This key standards program enhances citizens' quality of life, ensuring our citizens are provided with safe, beautiful, vibrant neighbourhoods that cultivate community pride. The program also improves the perception of neighbourhoods, which can encourage investment from developers leading to growth.

Since implemented in 2019, the program has been a success. Operated by a single standards officer, the program resolves over 125 unsightly premise and zoning cases each year. These cases are primarily resolved by working with property owners to achieve voluntary compliance. As a result, formal enforcement measures rarely become necessary to resolve a case. However, in the rare cases where enforcement is necessary, staff can arrange cleanup of unsightly premises and can pursue fines when addressing zoning violations.

Over the past two years, the program has seen a substantial increase in the number of incoming cases. Several factors have contributed to this, including population growth and implementation of the Integrated Customer Service Centre which streamlined the complaint submission process for citizens. Additionally, where over 400 cases have been resolved since program implementation, it is likely that more complaints are being submitted as citizens have greater confidence that a complaint will lead to results.

Due to these and other potential factors, the rate at which new cases are being added has increased 70% in 2022 and in 2023 when compared to prior years. As a result, more cases are being added than can be addressed with current capacity and the overall caseload has reached record levels. The caseload can no longer be handled by just one officer; the program would benefit from additional resources. Staff is recommending that another standards officer be added which would double the capacity of the program. Doing so would allow for gradual reduction of the caseload down to normal levels and ensure there is capacity to address the increased number of incoming cases.

If this recommendation were approved, it would allow this key standards program to have a greater impact in our communities. Further, staff commits to returning to report on measured outcomes of the expanded service for 2026 budget consideration.

In alignment with the 10-year strategic plan, improving the Community Standards Program will provide our citizens with safer, aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods that cultivate community pride.

### **STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

The Belong priority focuses on enhancing quality of life, ensuring community safety, and cultivating community pride by providing our citizens with safe, clean, and affordable neighbourhoods. The City's Community Standards Program directly addresses those needs by enforcing general community standards.

The Grow priority focuses on both population and economic growth with the goal of growing both the City's population at 2% annually and the City's tax base at 3% annually. By enforcing by-law standards, the Community Standards Program improves the perception and livability of neighbourhoods, which can encourage investment from residential and commercial developers, particularly in the City's primary development area.

### ***SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES***

The proposed enhanced service would require additional staff to augment the City's Community Standards Program. By increasing the level of service provided by this program, the City will experience safer, aesthetically pleasing, more vibrant neighborhoods that cultivate community pride.

The up to 24-month service expansion would cost \$180,000, which is proposed to be funded through the City's Community Services Reserve. The Reserve currently has \$585,000 in the fund; if this service enhancement is approved, there will be \$405,000 remaining in the reserve.

### ***INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS***

N/A

### ***ATTACHMENTS***

Presentation