

COMMON COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	2023-001
Report Date	January 03, 2023
Meeting Date	January 09, 2023
Service Area	Growth and Community Services

Her Worship Mayor Donna Noade Reardon and Members of Common Council

SUBJECT: Community Enhancement Project

AUTHORIZATION

Primary Author	Commissioner/Dept. Head	Chief Administrative Officer	Chair of Growth Committee
<i>Benn Purinton</i>	<i>J Hamilton/A Poffenroth</i>	<i>J. Brent McGovern</i>	<i>Councillor Joanna Killen</i>

RECOMMENDATION

Growth Committee recommends that Common Council:

1. Receive and file the attached report and presentation slides on the Community Enhancement Project.
2. Aggressively pursue with the Province of New Brunswick the following improvements outlined by the Community Enhancement Project:
 - a. The ability to implement a Vacant Building Tax and/or a Vacant Building Registry linked to the property tax system.
 - b. An improved Tax Sale process that better addresses abandonment.
 The Mayor prepare on behalf of Common Council a letter to be directed to each of the appropriate Provincial Ministers to begin the pursuit of these changes.
3. Direct staff to amend the Beautification Grant Policy to migrate the Beautification Grant Program to the North End for 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Enhancement Project is a holistic one-year review of the City of Saint John's Property By-law Compliance Programs. The project is meant to identify areas of opportunity and develop improvements to our Compliance Programs that will allow staff to better execute on Common Council's priorities. Council's Grow and Belong priorities are the areas where the City's Property By-law Compliance Programs can have the most impact and therefore the project was focused on developing improvements that relate to both Grow and Belong.

In addition to better impacting Council's priorities, the project also evaluated opportunities to synergize compliance efforts with the overall strategic direction at the city, including neighbourhood planning initiatives and affordable housing action items.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

N/A

REPORT

Under the Community Enhancement Project, improvements to the City's Property By-law Compliance Programs have been developed with a focus on three project goals:

1. Developing a Community-Based Approach
2. Facilitating Compliance
3. Enhancing Enforcement

By addressing these needs, staff will have better tools to directly impact compliance cases in communities, thus achieving more growth, creating safe livable neighbourhoods, and cultivating community pride. Addressing these needs will also prevent loss of housing stock which is critical for long term affordability.

Multiple improvements have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented that will allow staff to better achieve Council's priorities as they assist in Developing a Community Based Approach and Facilitating Compliance. This includes the following:

- Implementation of Focus Areas
- Compliance Program Reprioritization
- Establishing Program Coordination Meetings
- Strengthening Relationships with Community Groups
- Expanded Developer Notification List
- Expanded Beautification Grant

More information on these improvements can be found in the attached report under the Implemented Improvements section.

There are various opportunities for the City to improve its Property By-law Compliance Programs and achieve the project goal of Enhancing Enforcement. Some of these opportunities could benefit from increased resources, although not required to implement, and others would require legislative change. A summary

of these opportunities along with their potential effectiveness and the respective barriers is provided in the attached report under the Areas of Opportunity Analysis section. From this section, the following improvements **are being implemented** beginning in 2023:

- Enhanced Minimum Standards
- Unsightly Repair Program
- Court Proceedings for Vacant Buildings

Also from this section, the following improvements require change at the provincial level:

- Vacant Building Tax / Registry
- Improved Tax Sale Process

It is recommended that those changes be pursued with the Province.

With the improvements and recommended changes developed under the Community Enhancement Project, staff will be in a better position and have a variety of tools to intervene earlier on in the enforcement process. This will prevent deterioration, reduce vacancy and reduce demolition. The improvements and recommended changes developed under the Community Enhancement Project will allow for future growth, create safe livable neighbourhoods, cultivate community pride and prevent loss of housing stock to ensure long term affordability. The attached report provides an in-depth review of the Community Enhancement Project. For more information on the project, please refer to the attached report.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

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. The City's Property By-law Compliance Programs play a direct role in that by facilitating investment into mainly residential buildings. This not only has a direct impact on tax base growth, but it also allows for population growth by ensuring a supply of safe housing.

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 Property By-law compliance programs directly address those needs by addressing hazardous building conditions, ensuring neighbourhood cleanliness and enforcing general community standards.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

Staff to implement the enhanced programs and return to Growth Committee with additional resource requirements.

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

General Counsel provided guidance on the City's ability to implement an Unsightly Repair Program, a Vacant Building Tax and a Vacant Building Registry under existing legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

Community Enhancement Project Report
Community Enhancement Project Presentation Slides