

COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	2019-98
Report Date	April 16, 2019
Meeting Date	April 23, 2019
Service Area	Growth and Community Development Services

His Worship Mayor Don Darling and Members of Common Council

SUBJECT: Growth Reserve Fund Request - Dangerous and Vacant Building Program

OPEN OR CLOSED SESSION

This matter is to be discussed in open session of Common Council.

AUTHORIZATION

Primary Author	Commissioner/Dept. Head	City Manager
<i>Growth Committee</i>		

RECOMMENDATION

Growth Committee recommends the following resolution for Common Council's consideration:

Common Council authorizes the transfer of \$25,000 from the Growth Reserve Fund to support the enhanced Dangerous and Vacant Building Program for 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the Dangerous and Vacant Building Program was included in the Roadmap for Smart Growth to help deliver tax-base growth within the City of Saint John by eliminating dangerous, vacant buildings that negatively impact property value and compromise the safety and quality of life of citizens. The accelerated Program resolved 80 cases in 2017.

In 2018, the Program's momentum continued with additional resources allocated to enhance the program's mandate which included a focused approach in the City's North End. In 2018, 83 cases were resolved.

The following report will provide a 2018 year-end Program update, in addition to providing 2019 targets given the same level of funding as 2018.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

On September 10, 2018, Common Council adopted the following resolution:

“RESOLVED that as recommended by the City Manager in the submitted report, M&C2018- 256: Growth Reserve Fund Request Common Council authorizes the transfer of up to a maximum of \$200,000 from the Growth Reserve Fund towards Growth and Community Development Services to support the pursuit of growth - related activities.”

This investment included \$25,000 to deliver an additional 10 notices to comply under the Vacant and Dangerous Buildings Program in 2018 and continue efforts to encourage more repair and reoccupation of buildings.

REPORT

2018 Dangerous and Vacant Building Program Results

Aggressive, strategic targets, a temporary professional resource and a focused, streamlined approach were key components to the success of the enhanced Dangerous and Vacant Building Program in 2018. Public response to the accelerated Program continues to be extremely positive. The success of 2018 was made possible with the additional temporary resource allocated to the program from May – December. The extension funded by the Growth Reserve, allowed for the target number of Notices issued to increase from 25 to 35 and for the targets for demolitions and repairs to be exceeded.

The 2018 North End Focus area, which included 26 properties, saw significant results. A total of 10 buildings were demolished and 2 buildings were repaired and reoccupied. Focus in the North End will continue throughout 2019.

The table below details 2018 Program targets and year end results. A total of 83 cases were resolved in 2018, with 33 demolitions and 50 repaired and reoccupied buildings. The City completed 27 of the 33 demolitions.

2018 Dangerous and Vacant Building Program		
	Target	Result
Notices to Comply	35	32
Demolitions	30	33 (27 City Demolitions)
Repaired/ Reoccupied	45	50
Total Closed Cases:	75	83

2019 Dangerous and Vacant Building Program

The Program momentum of encouraging owners of vacant and dangerous properties to repair, reoccupy or demolish buildings will continue in 2019 with a

target of 80 resolved cases. Targets have been adjusted to reflect anticipated challenges and case management predictions, which includes:

- Issuing 30 Notices to Comply, this is on par with 2018 at 32 Notices issued. Entry warrants will be required to inspect abandoned buildings or to gain entry into buildings with uncooperative owners. Active owners will also yield more discussion, negotiating and potential appeal hearings.
- Total of 30 demolitions. It is anticipated that fewer city demolitions will be required as the severity of conditions in the buildings at the top of the priority list are decreasing. Focus will remain on encouraging property owners to repair and reoccupy, in addition to encouraging owners to demolish derelict buildings themselves.
- 50 Repaired/ Reoccupied buildings. This volume is expected to remain steady with continued focus on encouraging repairs as opposed to demolishing, yielding tax-base growth. In addition, a number of buildings on the list have open building permits and are expected to be completed in 2019.

See the below table which reflects 2019 Targets for the Dangerous and Vacant Building Program.

2019 Dangerous and Vacant Building Program		
	2018 Results	2019 Target
Notices to Comply	32	30
Demolitions	33	30
Repaired/ Reoccupied	50	50
Total Closed Cases:	83	80

There are currently 190 vacant buildings on the City's monitoring list. In 2018, a high of 220 active cases was reported, with an average case load of approximately 200 in the past few years. Although it appears as minimal progress, the program is trending in the right direction with the quality of buildings on the list improving. It is anticipated that a pivot of program direction will be required in the near future; from the focus on enforcement and demolitions to encouraging and spurring re-investment and revitalization of communities.

To complement the Dangerous and Vacant Building Program, the enhanced Community Standards Program has a target of 85 unsightly premises clean-ups for 2019 and achieved 75 clean-ups in 2018.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Enforcement of the *Saint John Unsightly Premises and Dangerous Buildings and Structures By-law* aligns with Council's Vibrant, Safe City priority.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

As included in this report, in addition to:

As per section 143(1) of the Local Governance Act, City staff submitted reimbursement packages to the Province of New Brunswick in December for 2018 demolition and unsightly clean-up bills left unpaid. In total, 22 properties were submitted for reimbursement and all were approved by the Province, resulting in reimbursement in the amount of \$304,833.89, which will be paid to the City in the March transfer payments.

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Presentation